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Class, Estate and Status in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1938

by Margaret Bolton Smales, M.A., Dip.Lib.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (discipline:  
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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to apply the methodology developed in Arthur Marwick's Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the U.S.A. Since 1930 to the study of the Czechoslovak First Republic. It examines first those salient features in economic and political development which helped to shape Czech and Slovak societies in this period, paying particular attention to the impact of independence in 1918, and of subsequent social and economic reforms, on class relationships. It considers also the dichotomy between Czech democratic aspirations and the imperatives of the Habsburg past. Next it analyses contemporary perceptions of class, and of other dimensions of stratification, categorising these by source as follows: legal and bureaucratic materials, political party programmes, academic writings and informal and anecdotal accounts. A rough outline of those social groups which contemporaries felt to be of particular importance is gradually built up, and the interplay between the divisions and labels presented in the various sources is discussed. Then demonstrable facts of inequality, such as the distribution of wealth and incomes, and the nature of housing, are outlined, and some general observations are made about the distribution of power and authority in inter-war Czechoslovakia, and about the relevance of voting behaviour as an indicator of the significance of class at this time. Finally the thesis reaches some overall conclusions about the nature and historical import of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia,



with special reference to the notion of Czechoslovakia  
as the "society of the little man".

## Preface

This thesis was conceived as part of an Open University research project investigating various aspects of "Images of Class". I should like to thank all my colleagues on this project for their many suggestions and criticisms, and in particular my supervisor, Professor Arthur Marwick, for his help and support.

I have also had fruitful discussions with Professor Zbyněk Zeman, Professor Jaroslav Krejčí and Dr Igor Hájek. Dr James Naughton deserves special mention for providing much constructive criticism, and for reading part of the text, as does Peter Jones, without whose moral support I would have found it difficult to complete this thesis.

During the course of my research I twice visited Czechoslovakia, supported by scholarships from the British Council. I received considerable bibliographic help from my supervisor in Prague, Dr Vladimír Dubský, and also had stimulating discussions with Dr Jan Havránek, Dr Robert Kvaček and Dr Zdeněk Deyl, amongst others. Although they may not have agreed with my approach to this subject, their remarks did help to clarify my understanding of inter-war Czechoslovakia.

I should like to acknowledge the considerable assistance of the personnel from the following libraries and archives: the British Library, the State Libraries in Prague

and Bratislava, the Library of Congress, the British Library of Political and Economic Science, the Bodleian Library, the University Library in Cambridge, the Comenius Centre Library at Lancaster University, the Library of the School of Slavonic and European Studies, the Library of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Library of the Collegium Carolinum in Munich, the Central State Archives in Prague, the Slovak Central State Archives in Bratislava, the Literary Archives of the Matice Slovenská in Martin, the Archives of the Ethnographic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, the Archives of Charles University in Prague, the Archives of the National Technical Museum in Prague, and the Archives of the Revolutionary Trades Union Movement in Prague.

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List of abbreviations

č: number (číslo).

ČSČH: Československý časopis historický.

Kč: Czechoslovak crown (koruna). From 1923 onwards there were approximately 140 Kč to the pound.

KSČ: Komunistická strana Československa. The Communist party of Czechoslovakia.

LAMS: Literární archiv Matice slovenskej. The Literary Archives of the Matice slovenská in Martin.

MSP: Ministerstvo sociální péče. The Ministry of Social Welfare.

ŠSÚA: Štátny slovenský ústredný archív. The Slovak Central State Archives in Bratislava.

SÚA: Státní ústřední archív. The State Central Archives in Prague.

## Glossary

buržoa: bourgeois.

čeled: a labourer employed on a permanent, or semi-permanent, basis to work on the land, in the farm or in the farmer's household, in return for a wage, bed and board. Also known as a pacholek. In Slovak, čelad.

čelední knížka: a work book issued by the local authorities in which details of contracts were entered. The čeled was not allowed to break his contract without lawful reason, and could otherwise be forced to return to his employer. Abolished in 1919 in the Czech Lands, but not in Slovakia or Ruthenia.

čelední řád: a legal code covering the terms of employment of čeledi. Each province had its own code, dating from the mid-nineteenth century, and these codes contained such anachronistic terms as a ban on luxurious clothing, or the right of the employer to beat his čeled.

chalupník: a small-holder.

dělnická třída: the working class. In Slovak, robotnicka trieda.

dělníctvo: workmen, the work force. In Slovak, robotníctvo

dělník: a worker by implication, a manual worker. In Slovak, robotník.

deputátník: a married čeled, who received payment in kind, rather than bed and board in his employer's household. May be called bíreš in Slovak.

domkář: a dwarf-holder, owning less land than a chalupník. In Slovak, domkár.

gažista: a salaried employee.

gymnasium: a grammar school.

honorace: lit. notables - implies the most prominent people in town society.

intelektuál: intellectual.

intelligence: intelligentsia.

kapitalista: capitalist.

kovožemědělec: lit. metal-agriculturalist. Someone who combined industrial work with labour on the family small-holding.

lid: the people.

maturita: school-leaving certificate. Equivalent to the German Abitur.

měšťanská škola: lit. civic school. A higher-elementary school. In Slovak, městianska škola.

milostpaní: lit. gracious lady. A polite form of address, used by social equals or by subordinates when addressing someone higher placed than themselves socially. In Slovak, milostpani

nádeník: a day labourer. In Slovak, nádenník.

notář: a notary. In Slovak, notár.

obchodní pomocníci: lit. trade assistants. White-collar employees in commerce and industry.

obchodník: a shopkeeper, a businessman.

obecná škola: elementary school. In Slovak, ľudová škola.

onikat: to address by the third person plural (oni: they), rather than the more usual vy. Used as a sign of respect in Slovakia.

pán: gentleman.

proletariát: proletariat.

řemeslník: an artisan, usually implies someone who is self-employed. In Slovak, remeselník.

rolník: a farmer, see also sedlák and zemědělec. In Slovak, roľník.

sedlák: a peasant, see also rolník and zemědělec. In Slovak, sedliak.

šlechta: nobility. In Slovak, šľachta.

smetánka: the social elite. In Slovak, smotánka.

společnost: society. In Slovak, spoločnosť.

statkář: an estate-owner. In Slovak, statkár.

stav: estate, profession.

střední stav: the middle estate. In Slovak, stredný stav

svobodné povolání: lit. the free professions, the liberal professions. In Slovak, slobodné povolanie.

třída: class. In Slovak, trieda.

třídní boj: the class struggle. In Slovak, triedny boj.

učeň: an apprentice.

úředník: an official. In Slovak, úradník.

velkomožný pán: lit. all-powerful sir. A respectful mode of address, already somewhat anachronistic in the inter-war period. In Slovak, velkomožný pán.

velkostatkář: a large-estate owner. In Slovak, veľko-statkar.

venkovan: a countryman. In Slovak, vidiečan.

vrstva: stratum

zbytkář: the owner of a residual estate, created as a result of the land reform. In Slovak, zbytkár.

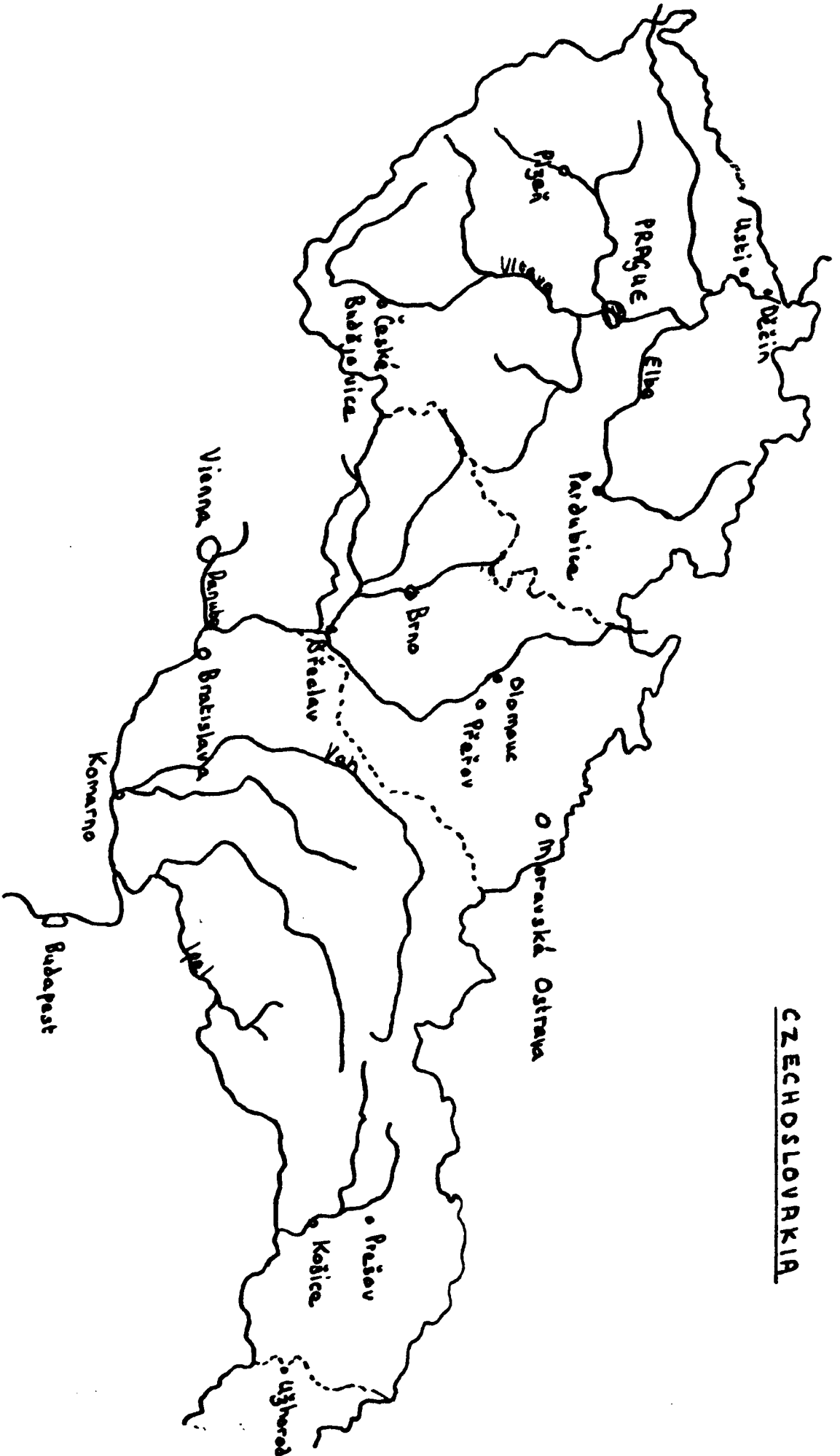
zemědělec: an agriculturalist. See also rolník and sedlák. In Slovak, poľnohospodár.

živnostenský řád: a code of laws for trade and industry.

živnostník: a tradesman, a small entrepreneur.

zřízenec: a lower-ranking non-manual worker. In Slovak, zriadenec.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA



## Introduction

This thesis is based on research carried out under the auspices of an Open University group investigating various aspects of "Images of Class". Its immediate source of inspiration is Arthur Marwick's Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA Since 1930, and it seeks to apply the methodology developed by Professor Marwick to the study of Czechoslovakia between the two World Wars<sup>1</sup>.

Basic to this methodology is the pragmatic investigation of historical sources. It must be stressed that the thesis is not conceived in any sense as an essay in class theory. It is not my concern to "prove" or to "disprove" the validity of a Marxist, or a Weberian, or any other approach to class analysis. Nor does my use of the terms "images" or "perceptions" imply allegiance to the sociological methodology developed by Professor David Lockwood, or Martin Bulmer, amongst others<sup>2</sup>. My intention is rather to employ the traditional methods of historical research to explore those subjective attitudes to class revealed in a wide variety of Czech and Slovak materials from the period 1918-1938, to discuss the implicit and explicit assumptions which underlie them, and to analyse the nature of their relationship, if any, to demonstrable realities of social and economic inequality.

The thesis will be divided into three main parts. In part one, I shall discuss the "historical context" of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia, that is to say, I shall seek to identify the salient features in economic and political development which helped to shape Czech and Slovak societies in the period in question. Included for discussion here will be such crucial questions as the distribution of power and wealth in the Czech Lands and Slovakia, and the extent to which deliberate political action to modify class relationships was successful. In part two, I shall examine contemporary perceptions of both class per se, and of other dimensions of stratification within Czech and Slovak societies, such as the distinction made colloquially between "gentlemen" and "common people", or the urban-rural divide. This will involve the examination of a wide range of sources, ranging from the legal and bureaucratic to the anecdotal, many of which have never been used before in a work of historical analysis. As the patterns apparent in each different type of source material are superimposed, certain common assumptions about the basic principles underlying social stratification will be revealed, and a rough outline of those social groups which contemporaries felt to be of particular significance will emerge. In part three, I shall examine demonstrable facts of social inequality, such as the distribution of wealth and incomes, and the nature of housing, as well as issues such as voting behaviour, which are useful indicators of the significance of class in Czech and Slovak societies. I shall then draw some overall conclusions about the nat-

ure and historical import of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia.

In so far as the above aims necessitate a working hypothesis about the nature of class, I would state my position as follows. In a rapidly and intensively industrialising country, traditional, legally defined, estate divisions and relationships are gradually replaced by a distinctive social structure best described as a class society. Classes are to be understood as "large-scale aggregates of individuals, comprised of impersonally defined relationships, and nominally 'open' in form"; they are based on "differentials of market capacity", which include educational qualifications and technical skills, as well as the factor of property ownership<sup>3</sup>. In practice, class is marked by distinctions in such matters as power, wealth and way of life, which create a common social bond between individuals. It is very important, in this context, to note that industrialisation in inter-war Czechoslovakia was not as far advanced as in certain other West European countries, notably Britain and Germany. As chapter one, outlining the "historical context", will make clear, even in the more advanced Czech Lands, we are dealing with a society which retained many "traditional" features, whilst in Slovakia, during this period, only a minority of the population was affected by the process of industrialisation<sup>4</sup>. In examining perceptions of the social order in inter-war Czechoslovakia, therefore, I shall be concerned not merely with evidence relating to class as defined above,



but also with the lingering traces of pre-industrial attitudes.

The "visibility" of class in any given society does not, however, depend simply on the level of industrial development. If inter- or intra-generational social mobility is comparatively rare, classes are more likely to develop their own distinct social habits and behaviour patterns than in more "open" societies. Class divisions will normally be most apparent if common life experiences have been reproduced over several generations<sup>5</sup>. In the context of inter-war Czechoslovakia, it is important to take into account the expansion of educational opportunities, and the growth in importance of the white-collar professions, which was particularly significant in the Czech Lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in Slovakia after 1918. The First World War also had a far-reaching impact, and the establishment of a new state increased opportunities for social mobility and led to the development of new political and economic elites. As a result, some class divisions were less obvious to contemporaries than others, although this does not detract from the underlying validity of <sup>postulating</sup> class divisions in these societies.

Much of the evidence analysed in this study refers, either explicitly or implicitly, to Czech society; Slovak society is often treated in rather less detail, because of the paucity of material available<sup>6</sup>. I early decided to exclude the national minorities from the scope of my

enquiry, in part because of the linguistic difficulties involved, but also to ensure that the dimensions of the project were manageable. However, it should not be forgotten that stratification in inter-war Czechoslovakia had other dimensions than the purely social.

It should be emphasised that this thesis is, in many ways, a pioneering work. English language studies have tended to concentrate on the political history of the inter-war republic, which has usually been treated in a straight-forward chronological fashion<sup>7</sup>. The Czechs and the Slovaks have produced economic histories, and also detailed accounts of certain aspects of the labour movement, but their style is often highly polemical, and they tend to be preoccupied with the working class at the expense of the other social groups<sup>8</sup>. Even the more general observations in this study on questions such as the impact of the new state on society, the distribution of power and authority, and differences in life-styles and life chances between the various social groupings, may provide new information and fresh insights into the nature of the First Republic.

The only previous study of inter-war Czech and Slovak societies not written in strict Marxist terms was a short analysis published in 1955 by Jan Hajda, a Czech sociologist living in the United States<sup>9</sup>. Hajda's main conclusions are reproduced in Appendix one. His findings were apparently based largely on personal observation, as there are few direct citations of other

sources. In so far as Hajda did use contemporary evidence, he confined his attention to sociological studies, whose conclusions he tended to treat as demonstrable facts<sup>10</sup>. I have sometimes used the same sources, but have taken a rather more sceptical approach to this kind of material, which often reveals as much about the sociologist as it does about his subject<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, Hajda imposed on the social structure of inter-war Czechoslovakia a five-class scheme, based on methods used by Geiger to analyse German society. Neither these classes nor the labels used (upper, upper-middle, lower-middle, upper-lower and lower-lower) bear much resemblance to the broad social groupings which, according to my interpretation of the evidence, were perceived by the Czechs and Slovaks themselves. They certainly do not accord with contemporary stratification terminology<sup>12</sup>.

As well as providing the first systematic account of the subjective social perceptions of the Czechs and the Slovaks of the inter-war period, this thesis will also help to illuminate more general problems such as the relationship between class and a society which was still, in many ways, provincial in character, and the relationship between class and an "immature" capitalist society. It should contribute to our understanding of the development of class during the First Republic, and of social attitudes at that time, and especially of the dichotomy between Czech democratic aspirations and the imperatives of the Habsburg inheritance.

# NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Arthur Marwick, Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA Since 1930 (London, 1980).
2. See, for example, Martin Bulmer, ed., Working-class Images of Society (London, 1975).
3. Anthony Giddens, The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies, 2nd edition (London, 1981), p. 100, 103.
4. Chapter 1, p. 17.
5. Giddens, op.cit., p. 107.
6. This is especially true of sociology.
7. An example is the study edited by Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1948 (Princeton, 1973).
8. See, for example, Antonín Chyba's work, Postavení dělnické třídy v kapitalistickém Československu (Prague, 1961), and Václav Veber, Postavení dělnické třídy v českých zemích, 1924-1929 (Prague, 1965).
9. Jan Hajda, ed., A Study of Contemporary Czechoslovakia (Chicago, 1955), p. 84-141. For Marxist analyses of Czech and Slovak societies see František Charvát, Jiří Linhart and Jiří Večerník, Sociálně třídní struktura Československu (Prague, 1978), especially p. 20-26 and Michal Barnovský, Sociálne triedy a revolučné premeny na Slovensku v rokoch 1944-1948 (Bratislava, 1978), p. 9-34 passim.
10. And sometimes interpreted wrongly, as in his use of a survey of the working class undertaken in the late 1930s, but not in fact published until 1946, to illustrate changes in class relationships brought about by the Second World War; Hajda, op.cit., p. 111, see also chapter 4, p. 176, footnote 115.
11. See chapter 4, p. 159
12. See the comments on the language of class in chapter 1, p. 39-42.

## Chapter 1

### The historical context of class in Czechoslovakia 1918-1938.

#### I Introduction

This chapter will highlight those historical, geographical and economic factors which conditioned the forms and perceptions of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia. Particular attention will be paid to differences in social development between the Czech Lands and Slovakia, and to the impact of the setting up of a new state in 1918 on Czech and Slovak societies.

#### II Geography and Historical Tradition

Geography is one example of the different conditions under which Czech and Slovak societies took shape. Slovakia was not a natural geographical region<sup>1</sup>. Although the Carpathians cut off much of Slovakia from the Czech Lands, and the Tatra ranges provided a physical barrier between the Slovaks and the Poles, the main rivers all drained towards the Danubian lowlands in the south, leaving their valleys open to penetration from the Great Hungarian Plain. There was no obvious geographical barrier between the Slovaks and the Magyars<sup>+</sup>, a fact which facilitated the absorption of the former into the old Kingdom

+ The rivers Danube and Ipeľ were chosen as part of the southern frontier of Czechoslovakia in 1919-1920 for commercial and strategic reasons. There were, however, about 750,000 Magyars living to the north of this boundary.<sup>2</sup>

of Hungary. The Slovak-inhabited region was itself divided internally by mountains, and its population was both more rural, and much sparser, than that of the Czech Lands, all factors which inhibited national development. Moreover, the main lines of communication tended to run towards the south, helping to bind Slovakia into the Hungarian economy.

The Czech Lands, in contrast, were very well-served by geography. Mountains, the Sudeten Highlands, the Ore Mountains, the Czech Forest and the Šumava, provided natural frontiers to the north, west, and south-west, whilst the Carpathians divided Moravia from the Slovak-inhabited areas to the east. Only in the south-east was the mountain barrier lower than elsewhere, but it was still defensible. Bohemia, the western province, was a clear physical unit, its rivers draining radially to the central plain. It was separated from Moravia by the Bohemian-Moravia Heights, and both provinces retained something of a distinct identity<sup>3</sup>. However, this highland region was easily penetrable, and the differences between the two peoples were much less significant than those between the Czechs and the Slovaks.

Indeed, the Czech Lands had developed into a unified state, the mediaeval Kingdom of Bohemia, at a time when both France and Spain were still internally divided. In the fifteenth century, the Kingdom of Bohemia was at the forefront of religious reform, and memories of this Hussite period provided the Czechs with their most enduring

historical traditions. As interpreted by national intellectual leaders in the nineteenth century, the religious disturbances became a time in which the Czechs had taught Europe the value of liberty of conscience and democratic equality. Despite some dissenting voices about the historical validity of their claims, analyses of Czech history by Palacký, and his disciple Masaryk, had a profound influence on the Czechs' self-image as a nation<sup>4</sup>. The programme of the Czech National Socialists from April 1918, for example, proudly proclaimed the party's debt to "the socio-religious struggle of Hussite times, when the Czech nation marched at the head of the European nations on the path to civilisation"; whilst one year later, the National Democrats announced: "The Czech nation... is democratic in its spirit... The most splendid period of our history was founded in democracy"<sup>5</sup>. In the independent Republic, civic studies in state school placed great emphasis on the "meaning of Czech history", and children learned such choice quotations as Hus's claim that "we are all children of one Father, sons of one mother-earth. We are equal in the hour of our birth and of our death"<sup>6</sup>. Although the journalist and writer Ferdinand Peroutka might protest that the Czechs were sons of loyal citizens of the Emperor Franz Joseph, not of Žižka, the ideological identification with Hussite "traditions" was strong, and one of the abiding influences on social perceptions in the inter-war period<sup>7</sup>.

Whatever the philosophical significance of Hussite times for the Czechs, there can be little doubt that the religious wars of the fifteenth century both weakened and isol-

ated them. Gradually the Kingdom of Bohemia came within the Habsburg sphere, and an attempt at revolt, by electing the Protestant Elector Palatine as king in 1618, led to its final downfall. Defeat at the Battle of the White Mountain, and the subsequent execution, or exiling, of many of the Czech nobility and gentry, added another important strand to Czech historical tradition. The Czechs in the inter-war period were fond of declaring that they had no nobility, and were simply a nation of "common people"<sup>8</sup>. This claim was not totally accurate, since those Czech Catholic nobles who had remained loyal to the Emperor did survive the débacle of 1620. However, the Czech national revival of the nineteenth century was basically the offspring of the intelligentsia and the business and commercial strata, many of whom came from quite humble backgrounds<sup>9</sup>. After they had achieved independence the Czechs, like the Americans before them, took a positive pride in displaying their rejection of aristocratic habits and values. Indeed, in the Republic, refusal to wear a tail-coat, or a top-hat, and the deliberate eschewing of the conventions of polite society, were often paraded as the marks of a democratic spirit<sup>10</sup>.

Slovak historical memories and traditions were of a very different nature. Unlike the Czechs, they were unable to boast a glorious past which could give them a sense of national mission. The Great Moravian Empire of the ninth century was too far distant, and prior to independence the Slovaks had been under Magyar rule for about one thousand years. During this period, the Slovak-inhabited regions



had no distinct political or administrative character whatsoever, and formed part of the Kingdom of Hungary. The nineteenth century saw the slow development of a Slovak nationalist movement, paralleling developments in the Czech Lands. However, after the Ausgleich of 1867, whilst Vienna took a relatively tolerant view of Czech national aspirations, Budapest pursued a ruthless policy of Magyarisation towards her Slovak subjects. The latter were a poor peasant people, in whom difficult economic circumstances had encouraged both passivity and a marked sense of inferiority<sup>11</sup>. In the words of C.A. Macartney:

[Hungary's] shape and geographical structure exercised a strong and natural centripetal influence, and it was neither against their will, nor in defiance of natural laws, that many of her non-Magyar citizens, as soon as they climbed above the circumscribed horizon of the peasant, adopted the outlook, the political ideals, and in many cases, the language of the dominant and centrally-situated Magyars. 12

Although recent interpretations of Slovak history suggest that the success of linguistic and cultural Magyarisation before 1918 has been over-estimated, they do not deny the strong influence which the Magyar world outlook had on the Slovaks<sup>13</sup>. Hungary was a "gentry nation", characterised by social and political elitism. Ambitious sons of Slovak peasants assimilated norms of behaviour from the gentry, and unlike their Czech counterparts made no pretence of egalitarianism<sup>14</sup>. Even the small nationally-conscious Slovak intelligentsia was a somewhat exclusive group which, until the advent of the Czech-influenced Hlasist movement in the late nineteenth century, had little contact with the peasantry. Poverty and lack of education

amongst the peasant masses, and feudal-aristocratic traditions, produced an ethos amongst the Slovaks which differed sharply from the democratic self-image of the Czechs<sup>15</sup>.

### III Industrialisation and urbanisation

Ostensibly, the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia<sup>+</sup> had already achieved the economic profile of a modern industrial society by the time of independence. The first post-war census, dating from 1921, showed that, in Bohemia, 40.55% of the population was engaged in industry and handicrafts, and only 29.69% in agriculture, forestry and fishing. The figures for Moravia-Silesia were 37.79% and 35.27% respectively. Moreover, the gap between industry and agriculture widened still further in the following decade. By 1930, only 24.06% of Bohemia's workers were employed in agriculture, in comparison to 41.78% in industry, whilst Moravia had experienced the fastest industrial development in the Republic, with 40.82% of her population now engaged in industry, and a much diminished 28.56% in agriculture<sup>16</sup>. The proportion of the industrial population in the Czech Lands, taken as a whole, was about equal to that in Germany, and was, in Europe, exceeded only by Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland<sup>17</sup>.

Yet in 1937, a British observer was able to describe Boh-

+ The province of Silesia was merged with Moravia for administrative purposes in 1927. The term Moravia can normally be taken to imply both Moravia and Silesia.

emia as "highly industrialised, but... a country with few of the phenomena of modern industrialism"<sup>18</sup>. It is crucial to the understanding of Czech social attitudes in the inter-war period to realise that even the apparently advanced capitalist society of the Western provinces in fact retained many characteristics of pre-industrial times.

Social development had been affected by the tempo of industrialisation in the Czech Lands<sup>19</sup>. Although the industrial revolution started early in the nineteenth century, its first promise was long in reaching fruition. Progress was hampered by the inertia of what was still a semi-feudal state - labour service was not abolished until 1848, and the guild system, already outmoded, survived until 1859. Rapid industrialisation finally got underway in mid-century, with the development of manufactures on a broad front, in both Czech- and German-inhabited regions. However, the period of prosperity came to an abrupt end with the financial crash of 1873, and there followed several years of industrial crisis, which hit nascent Czech-owned manufacturing industry particularly hard. The shock of this economic collapse served to reinforce the anti-capitalist instincts of a traditional society. Whatever the truth in their complaints, Czech businessmen and financiers were to bemoan the lack of capitalist spirit amongst their compatriots right up to the Second World War<sup>20</sup>.

Economic growth began to rise again around 1880, but it was not until the mid-1890s that rapid industrial develop-

ment once more set in, and the two decades before the First World War mark the real apogee of the industrial revolution in the Czech Lands. Although industry had a long tradition, it was not until this period that it really began to impinge on the majority of the Czech population. Thus, in 1918, many members of the Czech industrial proletariat were only one or two generations removed from the land, and they often still maintained family connections with their native villages. Similarly, few families amongst the Czech economic bourgeoisie had been entrepreneurs for more than two generations. Although by the time of the First World War, between 25% and 30% of the industries in the Czech Lands were actually owned by Czechs, the development was sufficiently recent for Czech society to continue to perceive itself as the society of the "little man"<sup>21</sup>.

Despite the considerable progress of industrialisation, a very large percentage of the population continued, throughout the inter-war period, to live in villages and small towns. The 1930 census showed that 51.5% of the Bohemian population, and 49.6% of the population of Moravia-Silesia, lived in communities of less than 2000 persons; in Germany, in 1925, the comparable figure was 35.6%. Moreover, a further 14.5% of the Bohemian population and 19.6% of the Moravian population lived in small towns with less than 5000 inhabitants. Indeed, a high proportion of the industrial population of the Czech Lands was resident in rural or semi-rural communities. 46.6% of all employees in mining, and 30.2% of all employees in engineering, had their homes in villages with

less than 2000 inhabitants<sup>22</sup>. The coal-miner, or the engineering worker, who combined industrial employment with labour on his family's smallholding was a common figure, and these so-called metal-agriculturalists, kovozemědělci, cannot be classified unambiguously as members of an industrial proletariat<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, the proportion of the population actually employed in agriculture was still sufficient, at 25.6%, to constitute a substantial peasant class.

It is true that the largest population growth in the Czech Lands in the period 1918-1938 did take place in towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants (Prague and Plzeň in Bohemia, and Brno and Ostrava in Moravia-Silesia); the population of Prague went up by 25.44% between 1921 and 1930. Yet the overall proportion of the population living in such communities was still comparatively low - 13.5% in Bohemia and less than 10% in Moravia in 1930 - in comparison to 26.8% in Germany and almost 40% in Great Britain<sup>24</sup>.

Another crucial factor in assessing the nature of Czech social structure is the size of industrial concerns. There were some striking examples of industrial concentration: for example, the Škoda armaments and engineering works in Plzeň had more than 26,000 employees in 1929, of whom 22,000 were workers<sup>25</sup>. However, the industrial census of 1930 suggests a society in which small-scale production and craftwork continued to be extremely important. Of all the people employed in industry and handicrafts in that year, 34.7% worked in small concerns with less than

six employees, and only six factories in the Czech Lands had more than 5000 employees<sup>26</sup>. Industrial concentration was obviously lagging behind that in the more advanced countries of Western Europe. Moreover, there were still a large number of homeworkers - 85,731, including family members, according to the 1930 census, and in practice far more - although many of these were, admittedly, German<sup>27</sup>. Someone classed as an industrial worker according to the 1930 population census might, therefore, be a unionised, politicised employee of Škoda, living in an industrial city with a population of 114,000. He might equally well be the only employee of a craft workshop in a village.

The Czech Lands may not have presented the classic picture of an urban industrial society in the inter-war period. They were, nonetheless, the foremost industrial region east of the Elbe, inheriting an impressive share of the industrial capacity of pre-war Cisleithania<sup>28</sup>. The economy of Slovakia, in contrast, was still overwhelmingly dominated by agriculture. Almost four times as many people were employed in agriculture as in industry - 60.63% of the total working population in 1921, and 56.82% in 1930, in comparison to the 17.43% in 1921, and the 19.06% in 1930, who were engaged in industry<sup>29</sup>.

Although the Slovak word for peasant, sedliak, was virtually the same as the Czech sedlák, the two often meant very different things. Subsistence farming predominated in the mountainous regions which were the main areas of Slovak-inhabitation. Productivity in Slovakia as a whole

was only about 60% of that in Bohemia, although the land actually supported far more people. Agricultural overpopulation was considerable, despite the effects of land reform, for seasonal migration to Hungary was no longer possible after 1918, and emigration to the U.S.A. was severely restricted after 1924<sup>30</sup>. Although the Czech Lands, too, had their poor farming regions, like South Bohemia, or the Jihlava region of Moravia, the proximity of urban markets, and opportunities for the industrial processing of agricultural produce, meant a commercially-orientated and prosperous peasantry<sup>31</sup>. The inhabitants of Dolní Roveň, a village near Pardubice, which was the object of an extensive sociological survey, discussed in chapter 4 below, are a good example<sup>32</sup>. In rural Slovakia, in contrast, agricultural backwardness and grinding poverty were commonplace<sup>33</sup>.

Slovakia did not share the long industrial traditions of the Czech Lands and, at the time of independence, her industry was far less extensive. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century the Hungarian government had begun to stimulate industrial growth by means of subventions and tax relief and, as a result, there was a period of rapid industrialisation before the First World War. However, in 1910, only 18.4% of the population of Slovakia was engaged in industry, in comparison to 39.6% in the Czech Lands. Although the majority of the small and newly-emergent working class was Slovak, Slovak investment in industry has been estimated, in the same year, to comprise no more than 1% of the total<sup>34</sup>. Commercial enter-

prise was dominated by the Hungarian Jewish community and the Germans<sup>35</sup>. Before 1918, the Slovaks, unlike the Czechs, had no burgeoning economic bourgeoisie. Even in the inter-war period, they made only modest gains, owning about 5% of industrial capital in Slovakia by the mid-1930s<sup>36</sup>. Slovak claims to lack a native upper stratum of wealth had, therefore, considerable justification<sup>37</sup>.

In the inter-war years, Slovakia actually underwent a process of de-industrialisation. The Hungarian invasion of 1919, and the Allied counter-attack, left a trail of devastation, but competition from the highly-developed industries of the Czech Lands proved to be equally destructive. During the economic crisis of 1921-1923, over 200 factories closed down, including the iron works at Krompachy, which had employed over 2000 people. Central and East Slovakia never really developed any significant alternative to the heavy industry which was lost during this period. There were, therefore, few outlets for surplus agricultural labour, hence the picture of great rural deprivation which emerges in later chapters<sup>38</sup>.

Industry did continue to develop in Western Slovakia, helped by proximity to the Czech Lands. This accounts for the modest gain made in the size of the industrial population between 1921 and 1930. Small factories and workshops prevailed; in 1930 there were only seven concerns in the whole of Slovakia which employed more than 1000 people, in comparison to the 118 in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia<sup>39</sup>. As in the Western provinces, many



Slovak industrial workers lived in small communities, in the same year about 40% of all industrial employees came from villages with less than 2000 inhabitants<sup>40</sup>. Large-scale industry did not really begin to grow again until the late 1930s. After 1937 a "second line" of armaments and chemical industries was developed in Slovakia, in response to the German threat<sup>41</sup>. The impact on Slovak society came, however, too late to be reflected in the inter-war sources analysed here.

Perhaps the most important development for inter-war Slovakia lay not in any fundamental change in the balance between agriculture and industry, but rather in the growth of towns. Before independence under 23% of the population of Slovakia lived in communities with more than 2000 inhabitants. Only two cities, Bratislava and Košice, actually had populations of more than 20,000, and less than 15% of their inhabitants were Slovaks. Between 1921 and 1930, the proportion of the population living in towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants doubled, to 9.2% in comparison to 19.6% in the Czech Lands, as five other communities joined Bratislava and Košice in this category. In the two largest cities, the overall population growth was more than 30% during this period, and by 1930 Bratislava had more than 100,000 inhabitants. Moreover, the first decade of independence witnessed a considerable strengthening in the Slovak and Czech<sup>+</sup> share of the urban

+ After independence about 70,000 Czechs came to Slovakia, most of them state employees. By 1930, the number had risen to over 120,000. Many were based in Bratislava. Statistics recognised only "Czechoslovaks", so exact calculations by nationality are impossible.

Table 1: Economic composition of the population in percentages<sup>42</sup>

	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Industry and handi- crafts	Trade and banking	Transport	Public admin. and free professions	Army	Personal and household	Other
1921								
Bohemia	29.68	40.55	6.87	5.58	4.96	1.13	1.21	10.03
Moravia	35.27	37.79	5.30	4.97	4.39	1.05	.97	10.26
Slovakia	60.63	17.43	4.14	3.53	3.58	1.43	.58	8.68
1930								
Bohemia	24.06	41.78	8.91	6.18	5.13	1.19	1.49	11.26
Moravia	28.56	40.82	6.67	5.46	4.64	1.31	1.34	11.20
Slovakia	56.82	19.06	5.44	4.73	4.69	1.63	.78	6.85

population of Slovakia. The apparent Hungarian majority disappeared in many towns, and even in Bratislava and Košice more than 50% of the population was Czechoslovak by 1930. To some extent this represented the reversal of statistical Magyarisation of pre-war times, as people "rediscovered" their Slovak origins, but there was also a considerable influx of population from the rural areas<sup>43</sup>.

The continuing growth of urbanisation in Slovakia reflected not only the continuing development of industry in the west of the province, where six of the seven towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants were situated, but also the increasing importance of the tertiary sector. The number of people employed in trade, commerce and transport went up by almost one third between 1921 and 1930, and public administration and the free professions showed a similar increase<sup>44</sup>. Slovak life no longer revolved as completely around the peasant, and the village, as it had before the First World War, although society in Slovakia was still less developed than that in the Czech Lands.

The particular combination of progressiveness and retardation, which characterised economic life in the Czechoslovak Republic, was also apparent in its industrial relations. Czechoslovakia was one of the most highly unionised countries in the world. Trades union membership increased sharply at the end of the First World War, and by 1920 1,817,000 people, 50.6% of all wage lab-

our, belonged to a union. Although the upward trend was reversed during the economic crisis of the early 1920s, numbers had risen again to almost 1,734,000, 44.31% of all those in employment, by 1928. In absolute numbers, the Czechoslovak trades union movement that year ranked sixth in the world, but as a percentage of the total population (12.3%), it was exceeded only by Austria (16%), Great Britain (13.6%), and Australia (12.7%)<sup>45</sup>. In the industrialised Czech Lands, where trades unions had a strong tradition dating back to the late nineteenth century, this percentage was even higher; in Slovakia, especially in agriculture, many workers were still non-unionised<sup>46</sup>.

Despite its apparent numerical strength, the Czechoslovak trades union movement was highly fragmented. In the 1920s there were thirteen different union federations, dividing along political and national lines; in the 1930s this number had risen to sixteen. Every major political party, including the Slovak Populists and the German parties, had its own union movement. In addition, there were separate federations for white-collar employees and university graduates (although some of these people preferred to join political unions), and a number of small unions, with a total membership of between 200,000 and 300,000, which were not affiliated to any of the federations<sup>47</sup>. Although there were discussions between the two largest Czechoslovak federations, the Social Democrats' Odborové sdružení and the National Socialists' Československá obec dělnická, about the possibility of a merger, these came to nothing<sup>48</sup>. In 1927, however, the German and the Czechoslovak

Social Democratic union federations did unite<sup>49</sup>. Nonetheless, it is clear that the labour movement was weakened by ethnic and political divisions, and, in addition, most individual unions were craft based, rather than covering whole industries<sup>50</sup>.

Collective bargaining became increasingly common in the inter-war period, although the unions continued to permit smaller and weaker firms to pay lower wage-rates<sup>51</sup>. Factory councils, institutionalised by an act of 1921, allowed workers some semblance of influence in matters such as mass lay-offs<sup>52</sup>. There were also industrial tribunals, in which workers were represented alongside employers<sup>53</sup>. Yet industrial disputes were sometimes marked by considerable brutality; on several occasions demonstrations resulted in workers being killed. Violence reached a peak during the Depression; 29 people were killed and 101 injured between 1929 and 1933<sup>54</sup>. Slovakia was particularly prone to such violence, and both protests, and the response to them, suggested an underlying primitiveness in Slovak society.

#### IV The impact of 1918

Culturally and socially, Czech society in 1918 was essentially provincial. Until independence, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia were part of a much larger whole, and Prague, although the focus of Czech culture, and the second banking centre in the Empire, could not be claimed as a city of European or world significance. In economic and political affairs, the Czechs were dominated by Vienna. Much of the industry in the Czech Lands was controlled by Vien-

nese interests, and thousands of Czechs sought a living in the Imperial capital. High society was orientated towards Vienna, and at the tip of the social pyramid stood the Imperial court, the aristocracy, the high bureaucracy, the diplomatic corps, the higher-ranking clergy and the officer corps. Very few Czechs ever penetrated into these exclusive circles<sup>55</sup>.

Slovakia, before independence, was an integral part of Hungary, and did not even have provincial status. There was no one dominant Slovak cultural, political or economic centre and, indeed, the town with the highest number of Slovaks amongst its population was actually Budapest<sup>56</sup>. The limited franchise and corrupt electoral practices in Hungary ensured that there were only three Slovak representatives elected to the Budapest Diet in 1910, whilst the census of the same year reflected the pressures of Magyarisation in its claim that only 2911 Slovaks, half of them midwives, were employed in the Hungarian state service<sup>57</sup>. The only sure way for a Slovak to achieve high office was by renouncing his nationality.

The period between the wars was one of state building. Politics and economics were re-orientated towards Prague, which became the seat of government and the financial centre for the whole republic. Slovakia, given specific political boundaries and a much-improved educational system, rapidly developed a sense of distinct national identity. Bratislava grew in significance as an import-

ant focus for Slovak education and culture, and for the first time a substantial Slovak urban intelligentsia emerged.

In 1918, the Czechoslovak Republic needed a government, an administrative apparatus, a diplomatic service and an army. There was a sudden expansion of career opportunities, which brought considerable social mobility for some citizens of the new state. The ministries in Prague were staffed in part by Czech bureaucrats from Vienna, most of whom had previously been subordinate to German superiors. The Ministry of Agriculture, for example, was built up by Czech officials who had worked for years in the Viennese Ackerbauministerium<sup>58</sup>. Other recruits came from the provincial bureaucracies. National prejudice, and later language ordinances, hindered many of the Germans formerly employed from working in government service. Between 1921 and 1930, almost half of the Sudeten German state employees, excluding teachers, lost their positions, 33,000 of them in 1926, when the language ordinances went fully into force<sup>59</sup>. In Slovakia, the majority of Hungarian officials either retired, or returned to the rump Kingdom of Hungary. Initially their places were largely filled by Czechs, because there were so few suitably qualified Slovaks<sup>60</sup>. During the inter-war years, the number of Slovaks in state service rose steadily. However, they continued to be grossly under-represented in the Prague ministries, which were very much a Czech preserve<sup>61</sup>.

Similar factors operated in recruitment to the other state services. In the army, for example, preferment went initially to ex-legionaries, who were, by definition, mainly Czechs. Germans were often removed on flimsy excuses to permit the rapid advancement of Czech officers. Comparatively few Slovaks ever entered the Republic's military academy, partly because of a lack of suitably qualified candidates, but also as a result of the indifference of the Prague authorities. In the late 1930s, only one of Czechoslovakia's 113 generals was German, one was Slovak, and the Hungarians, who had been persistently irredentist, were not represented at all<sup>62</sup>. Czechs filled the main positions in the new diplomatic corps, too. The one notable exception was the Paris Embassy, which went to the Slovak, Štefan Osuský, who had been a member of the Czechoslovak delegation to the Peace Conference<sup>63</sup>.

Czech businessmen also benefited from independence. Even during the First World War, heavy industry and armaments, located in the Czech-inhabited areas, although not necessarily Czech-owned, had flourished at the expense of German consumer industries<sup>64</sup>. This trend continued after independence, since the Peace Settlement, by dismembering the Empire, left Sudeten industry dangerously dependent on export trade in a period of reduced demand. Slovak industry, developed specifically for the internal Hungarian market, suffered too from the realignment of trade after 1918, whilst Czech industry felt the least adverse effects<sup>65</sup>. Moreover, in the uncertain political atmosphere



after the end of the war, Czech banks were able to buy up shares in firms which had previously been controlled by German or Hungarian capital<sup>66</sup>. The currency reform of 1919 included a capital levy which hit the prosperous Sudeten Germans more than the other nationalities in the new republic; whilst "nostrification" ensured that every concern operating on Czechoslovak territory had to have its head office in the Republic, and to appoint a majority of Czechoslovak citizens to its board of directors<sup>67</sup>. The publisher, Julius Firt, noted in his memoirs that he followed a "typical post-war Czechoslovak career" by taking up a managerial position, at the age of 22, in a firm which had been forced to move from Vienna, and needed Czech officials<sup>68</sup>. The establishment of the Republic also helped the penetration of Slovakia by Czech capital. Although Slovak involvement in finance grew during the inter-war years, Slovak capital was very much the junior partner. The Moravská banka alone owned more industrial concerns in Slovakia than the four largest Slovak banks together<sup>69</sup>.

Thus the rise of the new state had a profound impact on the distribution of power and wealth in the provinces which became the Czechoslovak Republic, strengthening and expanding the upper strata of Czech society at the expense of the once dominant Germans and Hungarians. There were also, however, noticeable changes in the status of certain groups, which had been particularly prestigious in pre-war times. The upper reaches of the Catholic hierarchy, for instance, identified as one of the

main pillars of the Habsburg state, lost much of its previous social and political standing<sup>70</sup>. Anti-militarism had been an important feature of Czech politics in the pre-war years, and it revived under the privations of the First World War. The conscript army, set up in 1920, was regarded as a temporary phenomenon, which would eventually be replaced by a militia<sup>71</sup>. In this political climate, the social cachet of the officer corps also declined. It was not until the rise of Hitler that there was a great upsurge of interest in military affairs, and competition to gain admission to the military academy at Hranice became, for the first time, really fierce<sup>72</sup>. The bureaucracy, too, never quite regained the pre-eminence it had known under the Habsburgs. Its financial standing was seriously affected by wartime inflation, and the idea of the "proletarianised official" began to gain political credence<sup>73</sup>. Initial pay rises after 1918 favoured the lower ranks of state service, and a system of family allowances was introduced to add to the overall equalisation of salaries. It was not until mid-1926, after the disintegration of the broad government coalition led to a period of political realignment, that the principle of payment according to rank, with well-defined pay differentials, was re-established<sup>74</sup>. Such shifts in the prestige and financial standing of leading groups in society added to the feeling that a break had been made with what Beneš called the "classes and castes" of the Habsburg establishment<sup>75</sup>.

In the expansion of career opportunities of all kinds which followed independence, education took on a particular significance as a means to social mobility. Traditionally a source of great prestige, the winning of formal educational qualifications was also a necessary preliminary to many sought-after careers, including state service and membership of the so-called "free professions". Bankers and politicians, too, had often been through the "apprenticeship" of a university degree. The idea of a meritocracy was, indeed, central to Czech social ideology; Masaryk, for instance, claimed, "There can be no democracy without education"<sup>76</sup>.

The system which had been inherited from the Habsburgs gave a basic state education to pupils from all backgrounds; Czechoslovakia had very few private schools, and these tended to be associated with pedagogical experiments, rather than with the exclusive education of the rich. However, the rigidity and highly stratified nature of state education meant that few pupils went on to receive advanced training. The majority spent the whole of their compulsory education in an elementary school (obecná or ľudová škola); others transferred at the age of eleven to a higher elementary school (měšťanská škola), where they spent three or four years, and were then qualified for further vocational training. Only a tiny minority successfully completed the entrance examination to one of the four different kinds of fee-paying grammar school (gymnasium), and even fewer actually left school with the maturita (matriculation certificate) which allowed entry to university<sup>77</sup>.

From the early years of independence, there were demands to end the early selection process, and thereby make secondary education more accessible to children from the lower social strata. The only progress in this direction was legislation in 1930, which brought in a unified curriculum for the first two years of grammar school and higher elementary school, facilitating late transfers<sup>78</sup>. Although the overall expansion of secondary and tertiary education did increase the possibilities for advancement, especially in Slovakia, the system was not appreciably more egalitarian in 1938 than it had been before 1918.

The development of education in Slovakia was, nonetheless, one of the most notable achievements of the inter-war Czechoslovak Republic. After the closure of the only three Slovak grammar schools by the Hungarian authorities in 1874, secondary education in the Slovak-inhabited regions had taken place solely through the medium of Hungarian. As a result, the last pre-war Hungarian census of 1910 claimed to find only 1946 self-declared Slovaks who had completed secondary education<sup>79</sup>. The transformation brought about after 1918 was such that, only six years after independence, R.W. Seton-Watson was able to claim: "No such remarkable example of cultural progress is to be found in the entire history of modern Europe"<sup>80</sup>. The rapid growth of a network of Slovak secondary schools, and a university in Bratislava, ensured the rise of a numerous, consciously-Slovak, educated stratum. By 1938, over 20,000 Slovaks had graduated from secondary schools, and this facilitated Slovak participation at all levels

of society<sup>81</sup>. No longer was the mastery of the Hungarian language a prerequisite for social advancement.

The transformation of the Slovak educational system in the years following 1918 was only one example of the extensive changes initiated by the new republic. Independence gave the Czechs the opportunity to translate into practical terms the democratic ideology of their nineteenth-century nationalist leaders, and social unrest in the aftermath of four years of war made some action imperative. Land reform, for instance, had been mooted even before independence, but its urgency was compounded by the influence of the Russian Revolution, rising expectations amongst the peasantry, and attempts by some landless rural workers in Slovakia to seize estates by force, after the collapse of the Magyar regime<sup>82</sup>. There was an added incentive, too, in that land reform would serve to undermine the economic position of the largely German and Magyar nobility.

President Masaryk, in 1927, described the land reform as a "conservative reform"<sup>83</sup>. Although the Land Control Act of 1919 had conceived 500 hectares as the maximum permissible size for any estate, even in the most exceptional circumstances, and 150 hectares as the normal maximum size of arable holdings, such limits were not rigorously enforced. The original owners actually retained about forty-five per cent of the land which the government had been empowered to expropriate; the Schwarzenbergs, for example, remained in possession of 50,000 hectares<sup>84</sup>.

Enough land was confiscated, with compensation paid at about two thirds of the 1913 value, to enable more than 600,000 small farmers to receive, on average, just over one hectare of land. In addition, about 2000, often highly profitable, "residual estates" of about 100 hectares were created from the nuclei of the great estates. These were sold by the Agrarian-controlled Land Office, usually to their own Czech, or Slovak, political supporters<sup>85</sup>. The results hardly implied a fundamental change in the social structure of the Czechoslovak countryside. Latifundia, often German- or Magyar-owned, were reduced in size, but there were still many large estates. Indeed, as will be seen, the owners of residual estates were sometimes described as the "new gentry", nové zemanstvo<sup>86</sup>. The number of dwarf-holdings, with less than two hectares of land, decreased, but small farms of two to five hectares still formed the majority of landholdings in Czechoslovakia. There was a considerable decrease in the number of agricultural labourers, many of whom went to swell the numbers of unskilled workers in the towns<sup>87</sup>. The reform did not solve the problem of land-hunger, especially in Slovakia, where there were few alternative sources of employment. It did, however, ensure the basic loyalty to the state of a large number of small and medium farmers, and it altered the nationality balance amongst landowners to favour, though not excessively, the Czechs and the Slovaks, who were the main beneficiaries of the redistribution<sup>88</sup>.

During the last two years of the First World War, popular discontent with growing privation had been manifest in a number of strikes, demonstrations and hunger marches in both parts of the Habsburg Empire<sup>89</sup>. The new republic had to face a much strengthened trades union movement (membership in the Czech Lands, for example, went up from 318,000 members in 1913 to well over one million in 1919) and considerable labour unrest<sup>90</sup>. Social stabilisation was helped by a series of legislative measures, starting with the introduction of an eight-hour working day in December 1918<sup>91</sup>. Unemployment benefits were introduced to help overcome the problems of demobilisation, rent control was brought in to help ease the post-war housing problem and war invalids and war widows were given pensions. Social insurance of all kinds was gradually extended and improved. For the first time, agricultural labourers were included within the provisions of social legislation, and their contracts of employment were placed on the same legal basis as those of industrial workers - an important point in any mapping of the social order in inter-war Czechoslovakia. Yet, as will be seen in a later chapter, the basic distinction between manual and non-manual labour was preserved in much of the crucial social and employment legislation of this period<sup>92</sup>. Reforms improved the quality of life, rather than radically changing existing social structures, and they did enable manual workers to identify with the new state.

In the heightened atmosphere of the first months of independence, much lip-service had been paid to the need for

what Karel Engliš, later to become Minister of Finance, called: "not just adjustments, but radical changes to the social order"<sup>93</sup>. All the parties, for instance, placed socialisation high on their list of priorities, and it was also mentioned in the programme of the first government. In May 1919 a committee was set up to discuss the nationalisation of mines, but when a bill was finally placed before parliament in 1921 it was easily defeated<sup>94</sup>. Other potentially far-reaching reforms, such as the institution of factory councils, or a tax on property, were implemented, but in an emasculated form<sup>95</sup>. Whatever the potential for change released by independence, 28 October 1918 did not herald a social revolution.

## V Religion and nationalism

As well as distinctions based on economic factors, or education, there were alternative focuses of social identification for the Czechs and the Slovaks of the inter-war period. Religion, for example, could act as a unifying factor across social barriers, although it was somewhat less potent a force amongst the Czechs than in Slovakia. At the inception of the Republic many Czechs still identified the Catholic Church with German political and cultural domination and the ultra-conservative Habsburg establishment. Especially in industrialised Bohemia, with its strong, self-confident Czech business and commercial strata, rejection of Catholicism could be seen as an assertion of Czech nationalism. Between the last Austrian census of 1910 and the first Czechoslovak census of 1921, the



number of Catholics in the Czech Lands as a whole fell by almost 1,400,000. Half a million of those Czechs who renounced their Catholic faith joined the newly-formed reformist Catholic, but anti-papal, Czechoslovak Church, and thousands more the Protestant Czech Brethren. In Bohemia, over 640,000 people now declared themselves to be "without confession"; the number in Moravia was much lower at 55,000<sup>96</sup>.

Religious differences underlined the distinct identities of the two Western provinces. Although Catholicism was still strong in the rural areas of Bohemia after 1918, it had lost the position of dominance amongst the Bohemian Czechs which it continued to hold in Moravia. Here the Populist Party consistently won the largest share of the vote in the inter-war parliamentary elections; the Christian Social trades union movement, too, was much stronger in Moravia than in Bohemia, and its head offices were situated in Brno<sup>97</sup>. In 1921, 89.7% of Moravian Czechs remained, at least nominally, Catholic, in comparison to only 70.9% in Bohemia<sup>98</sup>.

Amongst the Slovak peasantry, Catholic piety was even more deeply rooted than in Moravia. In the preliminary census of 1919, a few Slovaks, uncertain of the meaning of the question, actually gave their nationality as "Catholic", an indication of the importance of religion for their inchoate sense of collective identity<sup>99</sup>. Whilst the Bohemian Czechs, in particular, looked back on their Hussite traditions with pride, and throughout the Czech Lands, memories of seventeenth-century religious persec-

ution still lingered, the Catholic Church played a far more positive role in Slovak historical traditions, as a rallying point against the heathen Turkish aggressor. The Slovak population, largely rural and agricultural, and often uneducated, was virtually untouched by the secularism which was so strong in some parts of the Czech Lands.

In 1918, a majority of the Slovak people appear to have had little firm commitment to any nationality. During the following years a specific sense of Slovak identity grew encouraged by the expansion of education, economic grievances, and a resentment of Czech attitudes and behaviour<sup>100</sup>. Czech officials in Slovakia often showed little understanding of Slovak religious sensibilities, and the Slovaks were offended by their anti-clericalism and disregard for the distinctiveness of Slovak culture. Catholicism was a potent symbol of the traditional conservative values of Slovak society, and the Slovak Populist Party became the main focus of political opposition to the hegemony of Prague, especially since the Protestant minority tended to be Czechophile<sup>101</sup>. Economic and social grievances were subsumed in the Populists' attacks on the "godless" Czechs.

General dissatisfaction with the position of Slovakia and Slovak culture was thus often expressed in terms of clerical nationalism. For the Czechs, once they were freed from the immediate threat of Sudeten German intransigence, nationalism was no longer as strong a motivating force as it had been before 1918. Independence helped to fulfil

many of their socio-economic aspirations, and they were very much the dominant nation of the Republic.

In the 1920s, the Czechs' relationship with the Sudeten Germans, who formed about one third of the population of Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia, seemed to be increasingly harmonious. Indeed, active political cooperation began between the Agrarian, Catholic Populist and Social Democratic Parties and their German opposite numbers, and the two nationalities' Social Democratic Trades Union Federations actually amalgamated in 1927<sup>102</sup>. Nevertheless, nationalism lingered below the surface to emerge in times of stress. Hitler's success in the September 1930 elections in Germany, for example, was very closely followed by four days of anti-German riots in Prague<sup>103</sup>. Moreover, the claims of nationalism could be used to disguise what were essentially class issues, as in 1930, when there was considerable opposition to government plans to increase emergency payments to the unemployed because the worst-hit areas were German-inhabited<sup>104</sup>. As a positive force, too, nationalism could always unite Czech society in the face of external threat; this was especially apparent in 1938.

Despite Beneš's oblique reference, at the Paris Peace Conference, to a "sort of Switzerland", the Czechoslovak Republic was always conceived as a "nation state", rather than a "state of nationalities", in which each of the many ethnic groups would play an equal role<sup>105</sup>. According to official ideology, the dominant language and culture were Czechoslovak. Within this ethnic combination, the

Slovaks were seen as backward and less developed than the Czechs, junior partners, whose separate identity would gradually be subsumed in the higher Czechoslovak whole<sup>106</sup>. The Slovaks, however, increasingly chose to assert their own nationhood, whilst the national minorities, too, proved to be a chronic source of tensions<sup>107</sup>. National friction was eventually shown to pose a greater threat to the internal stability of the Czechoslovak Republic than did social divisions, although nationalism did serve, too, as a "psychological refuge for people confronted with other kinds of socio-economic problems"<sup>108</sup>.

## VI A note on the language of class

Perceptions of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia were obviously affected by the vocabularies and modes of expression available in Czech and Slovak<sup>109</sup>. However, the language used to describe the social order was itself the product of historical and political traditions. The actual word for class, třída in Czech, or trieda in Slovak for example, could not easily be divorced from its association with Marxist doctrine. The only Slovak encyclopaedia from this period had an entry for "class war" (triedny boj), which it defined as "the socio-economic struggle between the individual social strata", but none for "class", which was apparently felt to exist only as part of this conflict<sup>110</sup>. Non-polemical discussion preferred the neutral term vrstva, or stratum. Workers were the only class commonly referred to as such (dělnická třída or robotnícká trieda), presumably because they were the group most likely to be seduced by Marxism.

Although the usage dělnická třída had become colloquial, the scrupulous non-socialist might still choose to substitute a less emotive word, dělnictvo, the collective noun from dělat, to work.

Debate often focused not on "class" but on "estate" (stav); feudalism had lasted long in the Habsburg Empire, and the lingering influence of the ranks and orders of feudal society still coloured modes of expression. Individual professions were frequently called "estates", as in, for example, úřednický stav, literally "the bureaucratic estate". The term střední stav, or middle estate, was, however, primarily a political creation, the product of an ideology which posited the existence of a strong, united middle estate as a buffer between capital and labour. In colloquial speech, the English concept "middle class" was normally rendered as střední vrstvy, the middle strata, the diversity of this social group being suggested by the use of the plural form. However, it was also common to enumerate the various groups within the "middle strata" individually. The "official" (úředník or úradník), was an easily recognisable social type in a state which had strong bureaucratic traditions. The small entrepreneur (živnostník) might be a shopkeeper (obchodník) or an artisan (řemeslník). In either case he actually owned his own business, and might have several employees. The terms peasant (sedlák), and farmer (rolník), were used interchangeably to describe the owners of small- or medium-sized holdings. However, in feudal times, a "peasant" had been any non-noble cultivator of the land,

and large landowners, like Švehla, often applied the term to themselves, in order to emphasise their solidarity with the rest of agricultural society<sup>111</sup>.

Neither Czech nor Slovak colloquial language easily conveyed the notion of an upper class; vyšší třída, the literal rendering, was not normally used, and vyšší vrstva (upper stratum) was hardly more frequent. The term "better people" (lepší lidé), was used, and Čapek, for example, wrote a short story about the murder of a servant of a lepší slečna, a spinster lady of good background<sup>112</sup>. Sometimes reference was made to a social elite, who were variously labelled the crème de la crème (<sup>lit. cream</sup> smetanka), the "higher social circles" (vyšší sociální kruhy), or simply Society (společnost)<sup>113</sup>. Buržo and kapitalista were used as perjoratives. However, it was a feature of both Czech and Slovak social commentary that it rarely directed its attentions at the upper reaches of society.

Perhaps the most common colloquial division of society made in both Czech and Slovak was the distinction between pán a gentleman and lid the common people. This had its origins in feudal times, like many of the expressions used to describe the social order. Pán was the title given to a member of the noble estate, whilst lid embraced all non-noble members of the community. In the inter-war period, pán normally implied someone with a good level of education and a white-collar job, whilst lid had the connotation of simple, uneducated people<sup>114</sup>. However, in times of crisis, an appeal could be made to the "people"

through this same word. Moreover, it was sometimes used in its original meaning to emphasise that the Czechs had no nobility - they were all "commoners", and, by inference, natural democrats<sup>115</sup>.

## VII Conclusion

Karel Čapek wrote of the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic in October 1918:

We felt as if we had stepped into a paradise in which everything would be better. It seemed as if the Age of Justice had dawned, as if the social order had changed of its own accord... Of course, we felt obliged to celebrate our freedom by fulfilling old dreams... 116

Nationalist ideology had encouraged in the Czechs a strong sense of democratic mission, a belief that they were called upon to transform society, and create something uniquely their own. Philosophical pronouncements about the need for moral regeneration did not, however, constitute a practical action programme for an independent nation. The first act of the Provisional Government was essentially pragmatic, declaring that all existing provincial and imperial laws should remain in force<sup>117</sup>.

The interaction between democratic ideology and the Habsburg inheritance did much to shape class perceptions in the inter-war years. Czechoslovakia was a state in which modern industry existed side-by-side with small-scale production and handicrafts, and the majority of the population still lived in rural and semi-rural communities. Its ruling circles were, before 1918, no more than minor

provincial elites, and few families had been prominent for more than two generations. Belief in egalitarianism co-existed with a deeply-ingrained sense of social hierarchy. The republican citizen had, until 1918, been the loyal subject of the Emperor Franz Joseph, and whatever the democratic aspirations of the new age, the social attitudes left by rank-conscious Habsburg society were hard to eradicate.



# NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. The best geographical survey of Czechoslovakia is to be found in: Harriet G. Wanklyn, Czechoslovakia (London, 1954).
2. Victor S. Mamatey and Radomír Luža, eds., A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1948 (Princeton, 1973), p.35.
3. For an account of religious differences between the two provinces, see p. below. According to Wanklyn, Czechoslovakia, p.163, "through modern Czech history, the distinctions between Bohemia and Moravia deserve, perhaps, more attention than they have been given."
4. Hans Kohn, "The Historical Roots of Czech Democracy" in Robert J. Kerner, ed., Czechoslovakia, Twenty Years of Independence (Berkeley, 1940), p.91-105; Josef Korbel, Twentieth-century Czechoslovakia, the Meanings of its History (New York, 1977), p.10-21.
5. Program československé strany národně-socialistické přijatý na VIII valném sjezdu dne 30. 31.března a 1. dubna 1918, 2nd edn. (Prague, 1928), p.4; Program československé národní demokracie schválený valným sjezdem strany dne 25 března 1919 (Prague, 1919), p.5.
6. Quoted in an official guide for teachers of civic studies: Oldra Novotný, Národní výchova, občanské výchovy v praxi školní, vol. 2 (Prague, 1922), p.23.
7. Ferdinand Peroutka, Jaci jsme (Prague, 1934), p.9.
8. See, for example, the claim by Antonín Švehla, quoted in: Idea československého státu (Prague, 1936), p.228. For a background history of the Czech Lands, see: R.W. Seton-Watson, History of the Czechs and the Slovaks (London, 1943), also the introduction to: William V. Wallace, Czechoslovakia (London, 1976).
9. The anthropologist, Jindřich Matiegka, calculated that, of the ninety four Czechs whom he considered to be the most outstanding representatives of the nation in the nineteenth century, more than half came from the families of peasants, artisans, or small tradesmen: Jindřich Matiegka, "Psychoanthropologie Československa" in Československá vlastivěda, vol. 2 (Prague, 1933) p.243-346.
10. See chapter 5 below, p.221; also Jiří Guth-Jarkovský, Paměti, vol.3, no.1 (Prague, 1929), p.296.
11. See, in particular: Anton Jurovský "Slovenska národná povaha" in Slovenska vlastivěda, vol. 2 (Bratislava, 1944), p.333-398. For a background history of Slovakia, see: Lubomír Lipták, Slovensko v 20 století (Bratislava, 1968).

12. C.A. Macartney, Problems of the Danubian Basin (Cambridge, 1942), p. 63; quoted in Owen V. Johnson, Socio-cultural and national development in Slovakia, 1918-1938: education and its impact. Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1978, p. 20.
13. See, for example, Lipták, Slovensko..., p. 7-41 *passim*.
14. See chapter 5 below, p. 182-184.
15. Mamatey and Luža, A History..., p. 46.
16. Ibid. p. 42-43.
17. Heinz O. Ziegler, Die berufliche und soziale Gliederung der Bevölkerung in der Tschechoslowakei (Brno, 1936), Übersicht 1, no page reference.
18. Doreen Warriner, "Czechoslovakia and Central European Tariffs" in Slavonic Review, xi (1933), p. 321.
19. For a discussion of industrialisation in the Czech Lands, see: Bernard Michel, "Le révolution industrielle dans les pays tchèques au XIX siècle" in Annales, v (1965), p. 984-1005; Richard Rudolph, Banking and Industrialisation in Austria-Hungary (Cambridge, 1976); Otto Urban, Kapitalismus a česká společnost v 19 století (Prague, 1978); Stručný hospodářský vývoj Československa do roku 1955 (Prague, 1969).
20. See Urban, Kapitalismus..., p. 236-237, 269 for comments from Karel Havlíček and Jaroslav Preiss, and also Jan Antonín Baťa, Fučíme stát pro 40.000.000 lidí (Zlín, 1938), p. 175.
21. Stručný hospodářský... p. 87.
22. Ziegler, *op.cit.*, p. 64, 70 and Übersicht 39.
23. Křepiláková, in her work on the working class in the Czech Lands before the First World War, quotes from the Social Democratic political journal, Akademie, to suggest that the "landless, propertyless proletarian" and the "country worker with his smallholding" lived in "two different worlds": Vlastimila Křepiláková, Struktura a sociální postavení dělnické třídy v Čechách, 1906-1914 (Prague, 1974), p. 24.
24. Ziegler, *op.cit.*, p. 68-70
25. Kniha o Plzni (Pilsen, 1963), p. 94.
26. Václav Průcha, "Složení průmyslového dělnictva v předmnichovském Československu" in Revue dějin socialismu, special issue (1968), p. 973.
27. Doreen Warriner claimed that she was told that half a million people were engaged, either directly or indirectly, in home work. Warriner, *op.cit.* p. 323.

28. Přehled československých dějin, vol.3 (Prague, 1960), p. 47.
29. Mamatey and Luža, A History..., p. 42-43.
30. Imrich Karvaš, Sjednocení výrobních podmínek v zemích českých a na Slovensku (Prague, 1933), p.29-33.
31. For a discussion of agriculture, see Wanklyn, Czechoslovakia, p. 215-260.
32. Karel Galla, Dolní Rožná: sociologický obraz české vesnice (Prague, 1939); see also chapter 4 below, p. 145-152 *passim*.
33. See chapter 5, p. 190; Chapter 6, p. 241.
34. Lipták, Slovensko..., p.16.
35. Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 89.
36. Mamatey and Luža, *op.cit.*, p. 49.
37. See chapter 5, p. 217.
38. Karvaš, *op.cit.*, p. 35-49. See also the descriptions of rural poverty in Slovakia in chapter 6, p. 239.
39. Průcha, "Složení...", p. 973.
40. Michal Barnovský, Sociálne triedy a revolučné premeny na Slovensku v rokoch 1944-1948 (Bratislava, 1978), p. 17.
41. Johnson, *op.cit.*, p.89.
42. Mamatey and Luža, *op.cit.*, p.42-43.
43. Ján Verešík, "Mestá" in Slovensko, vol.3, part 1 (Bratislava, 1978), p. 532-534; Zdenka Holotíková, "Mestá na Slovensku v medzivojnovom období" in Historický časopis, xxi (1973), p.189-204.
44. Mamatey and Luža, *op.cit.* p. 42-43. See also table 1, p. above.
45. Alois Rozehnal, Ččborové hnutí v Československé republice (New York, 1953), p. 30-32.
46. For a background study of the trades union movement, see Miloslav Volf, Naše ččlnické hnutí v minulosti (Prague, 1947); Miloš Gosiorovský, Dejiny slovenského robotníckeho hnutia, 1848-1918 (Bratislava, 1956).
47. Rozehnal, *op.cit.*, p. 20-28; Václav Walzel, History of Czechoslovak Trade Unionism (New York, 1952), p. 30-38.
48. Volf, *op.cit.* p.233; Walzel, *op.cit.* p. 32-33.

49. Walzel, op.cit., p. 33, 37.
50. Ibid., p. 30-31.
51. Warriner, "Czechoslovakia...", p. 325.
52. Walzel, op.cit., p. 54-56; Volf, op.cit., P. 249.
- 53: Walzel, op.cit., p. 65; Edgar Young, Czechoslovakia: Keystone of Peace and Democracy (London, 1938), p. 144.
54. Květa Kořalková, Hnutí nezaměstnaných v Československu v letech 1929-1933 (Prague, 1962), p. 187-188, 214-215
55. Bernard Michel, Banques et banquiers en Autriche au début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris, 1976), p. 336-337; Elizabeth Wiskemann, Czechs and Germans, a study of the struggle in the historical provinces of Bohemia and Moravia (London, 1938), p. 62; Oscar Jászi, The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy (Chicago, 1929), p. 153; Norman Stone, "Army and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1900-1914" in Past and present, xxxiii (1966), p. 98.
56. Owen Johnson, "Urbanisation and the Formation of a Slovak Intelligentsia" in Keith Hitchins, ed., Studies in East European Social History, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1981), p. 32.
57. Lipták, Slovensko..., p. 16.
58. Helmut Slapnicka, "Der neue Staat und die bürokratische Kontinuität; die Entwicklung der Verwaltung, 1918-1938" in Karl Bosl, ed., Die demokratisch-parlamentarische Struktur der ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik (Munich, 1975), p. 123-124.
59. F. Gregory Campbell, Confrontation in Central Europe, Weimar Germany and Czechoslovakia (Chicago, 1975), p. 82.
60. Mamatey and Luža, A History..., p. 47; Antonín Boháč, "Češi na Slovensku" in Československý statistický obzor, xvi (1936), p. 183-190; Konstantín Čulen, Slováci a Česi v štátných službách ČSR (Bratislava, 1944), p. 24.
61. Čulen, op.cit., passim; Lipták, op.cit., p. 123-137.
62. Jonathan Zorach, "The Nationality Problem in the Czechoslovak Army Between the Two World Wars" in East Central Europe, v (1978), p. 169-185, especially p. 171-172.
63. See the entry in Kulturní adresář ČSR (Prague, 1934), p. 318.

64. Hospodárske dejiny Československa v 19 a 20 storočí (Bratislava, 1974) p. 73-74; Mamatey and Luža, A History..., p. 115-116, 205.
65. Wallace, Czechoslovakia, p. 169-171.
66. Jozef Faltus, "Nostrifikácia po 1. svetovej vojne ako dôležitý nástroj upevnenia českého finančného kapitálu" in Politická ekonomie, ix (1961), p. 30.
67. Ibid., p. 28-37; Campbell, Confrontation..., p.83.
68. Julius Firt, Knihy a osudy (Cologne, 1972), p. 10.
69. Lipták, Slovensko..., p.130
70. Matthew Spinka, "The Religious Situation in Czechoslovakia" in Kerner, Czechoslovakia..., p. 284-301.
71. Ferdinand Peroutka, Budování státu, vol. 3 (Prague, 1936), p. 1624. For an account of pre-war anti-militarism, see Jan Beránek, Rakouský militarismus a boj proti němu v Čechách (Prague, 1955).
72. Zdeněk Ullrich, "Životní plány našich abiturientů v letech 1934 až 1937" in Československý statistický obzor, xvii (1937), p. 344, 353.
73. See chapter 3, p. 110-111.
74. Jan Mertl, Eyrokracie: studie sociologicko-politická (Prague, 1937), p. 193-197.
75. Edvard Beneš, Demokratická armáda, pacifism a zahraniční politika, 4th ed. (Prague, 1937), p. 13, 15.
76. Quoted by Cecil Parrott in the introduction to: Věra Olivová, The Doomed Democracy, Czechoslovakia in a Disrupted Europe, 1914-1938 (London, 1972), p.9.
77. Francis Stuermer, "Education in a Democracy" in Kerner, op.cit., p. 302-315; Cwen Johnson, "The Development of the Slovak Intelligentsia, 1918-1938" in Don Karl Rowney, ed., Russian and Slavic History (Columbus, Ohio, 1977), p. 184-185. See also the discussion of "education and life chances" in chapter 6 below, p. 249-253.
78. Francis Stuermer, Training in Democracy, the New Scho Schools of Czechoslovakia (New York, 1938), p. 109; Stuermer, "Education...", p. 306-307.
79. Lipták, Slovensko..., p. 16.
80. R.W. Seton-Watson, The New Slovakia (Prague, 1924), p. 51.
81. The figure was calculated by Cwen Johnson in "The Development...", p. 187.

82. Slovensko, vol. 1 (Bratislava, 1971), p. 645.
83. Quoted in Deset let československé republiky (Prague, 1928), p. 405.
84. Milan Otáhal, Zápas o pozemkovou reformu v ČSR (Prague, 1963), passim; Lucy Textor, Land Reform in Czechoslovakia (New York, 1953), passim; Elizabeth Wiskemann, Czechs..., p. 159.
85. Alois Rozehnal, Land Reforms in Czechoslovakia (New York, 1953), p. 12; Dvacet let československého zemědělství (Prague, 1938), p. 32. Amongst those politicians who acquired residual estates were the Agrarians, Beran, Feierabend, Malypetr and Staněk and the Social Democrat, Bechyně, see: Otáhal, op.cit., p. 199.
86. See chapter 3 below, p. 103.
87. According to Miloslav Volf, op.cit., p. 223, the number of agricultural labourers fell from 973,606 in 1921 to 590,016 in 1930. Many of the inhabitants of the Bratislava shanty town described by Ilja Marko in Dornkappel, predmestie troch jazykov (Prague, 1938), passim, were agricultural labourers who had previously worked on large estates in Žitný ostrov.
88. For a discussion of the ethnic implications of the land reform, see Wiskemann, Czechs..., p. 147-160; Johann Wolfgang Bruegel, Tschechen und Deutsche, 1918-1938 (Munich, 1967), p. 537-539; C.A. Macartney, Hungary and Her Successors, the Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences, 1919-1937 (London, 1937), p. 172-173.
89. Jozef Butvin and Jan Havránek, Dějiny Československa, 1781-1918, vol.3 (Prague, 1968), p. 469-487 passim.
90. Vladimír Dubský, Odbory v počátcích Československého státu (Prague, 1978), p. 34 and passim; Mamatey and Luža, op.cit. p. 62, 104-105; Volf, op.cit., p. 247.
91. For a survey of social legislation see: Esther Eloss, Labor Legislation in Czechoslovakia New York, 1938; Twenty Years Of Social Welfare in the Czechoslovak Republic (Prague, 1938); Československá vlastivěda, vol. 6 (Prague, 1930), p. 101-156.
92. See chapter 2 below, p. 67-70.
93. Quoted in Dubský, Odbory..., p. 37.
94. Ibid., p. 45; Volf, op.cit., p. 245-7.
95. Volf, op.cit., p. 249; Peroutka, Budování..., vol. 3, p. 1643.
96. E. Čapek, "Politický vývoj a strany v československé

- republice", in Československá vlastivěda, vol.5 (Prague, 1931), p. 441-443.
97. See the discussion of politics and class in chapter 6 below, p. 265-266.
  98. E. Čapek, op.cit., p. 441.
  99. Josef Mraz, "O předběžném sčítání lidu na Slovensku roku 1919" in Československý statistický věstník, ii (1920), p. 135-136.
  100. Good accounts of the growth of Slovak nationalism are to be found in Johnson, Sociocultural..., passim; and "Urbanization...", passim.
  101. Cecil Gosling, the British representative in Prague, complained to Beneš in the autumn of 1919 about Czech behaviour in Slovakia, claiming that: "Hostility to the Roman Catholic Church evinced by Czech soldiers and officials... includes the desecration and mutilation of crucifixes and holy images." In Gosling's report to Earl Curzon he noted that Beneš had admitted that this charge was "perfectly correct", and had ordered the cessation of religious intolerance in Slovakia. Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, first series, vi, p. 335-336. In pre-war times, the Hlasists, who supported Czechoslovak unity, had been mainly Protestants. After 1918, the Czechs tended to favour Protestants when making appointments in Slovakia. Mamatey and Luža, op.cit., p. 8-9, 77.
  102. Johann Wolfgang Bruegel, Czechoslovakia before Munich (Cambridge, 1973), p.74-85; see also footnote 49 above.
  103. Campbell, Confrontation..., p.217-218.
  104. Ibid., p. 259; Brueghel, Tschechen..., p. 190-194.
  105. Brueghel, Czechoslovakia..., p. 47-51.
  106. A concise account of "Czechoslovakism" is to be found in Johnson, Sociocultural..., p. 65-73.
  107. Campbell, Confrontation..., passim; Wiskemann, Czechs..., passim; Bruegel, Tschechen..., passim; Macartney, Hungary..., passim.
  108. Campbell, Confrontation..., p. 272.
  109. The main dictionary used in compiling this section is Slovník spisovného jazyka českého, 4 vols., (Prague, 1960-1971).
  110. Slovenský naučný slovník, vol. 3 (Bratislava, 1932), p. 277.

111. The American ambassador to Prague noted Švehla's claim to be a "peasant" with some puzzlement, because he was an "educated man": Lewis Einstein, A Diplomat Looks Back (New Haven, 1968), p. 186.
112. Karel Čapek, "Kupon" in Povídky z jedné kapsy (Prague, 1967), p. 122-130.
113. See also chapter 5 below, p. 211-221.
114. See chapter 5, p. 181-186.
115. Antonín Švehla, in a conversation with Karel Čapek, claimed "We have no aristocracy... we have always been simply common people /lid/... Our history and our natural character allow no other possible course than democracy." See footnote 8 above.
116. Karel Čapek, Na břehu dnů, 2nd ed., (Prague, 1978), p. 256.
117. Slapnicka, "Der neue...", p. 121.



## Chapter 2

### Official perceptions of class, estate and status

#### I Introduction

The first category of materials to be examined includes the census, acts of parliament, legal codes and documents relating to social policy: in other words, sources which emanated from various government departments and other official agencies during the inter-war period. These legal and bureaucratic sources will be analysed to reveal official perceptions of the broad social divisions within Czechoslovak society<sup>1</sup>. Although the 1920 constitution guaranteed citizens equality before the law, stressing that "privileges relating to sex, birth or profession will not be recognised", it is clear that certain fundamental distinctions, notably the manual/non-manual divide, were underpinned by law<sup>2</sup>. Official pronouncements often provided an institutionalised basis for social boundaries, as well as illustrating the nature of social prejudice at this time.

#### II The census

The census may seem to be the natural place to look for official perceptions of class. It is, after all, often the only official source which presents a detailed scheme for the breakdown of society into various groups and subgroups. However, its intended purpose, in Czechoslovakia as elsewhere, was not necessarily to produce the kind of

analysis which would be most useful to the sociologist, or indeed to the historian of class. According to the Dictionary of Czechoslovak Public Law, the census returns were used by the inter-war administration in military matters, for they revealed the number of men of military service age, and in educational planning, as they also showed the number of children of school age; they further indicated the number of citizens who were of an age to vote, and were an invaluable source of information for financial planning and social legislation<sup>3</sup>. It is only in this last capacity, one amongst many of its functions, that the census proves at all revealing as a guide to the significant social divisions in Czechoslovak society.

The actual categories used by the Czechoslovak inter-war censuses were taken over, with only slight modifications, from the previous Austrian scheme. Preparations for a census had to be rushed through quickly, less than a year after the State Office of Statistics was founded, in order to provide up-to-the-minute statistical information on which to base projected social reforms<sup>4</sup>. There was no time to initiate large-scale revisions in the census format. In 1930, since no international method of classification had been devised in the interim, it was decided that the advantages of continuity outweighed any defects in the system used<sup>5</sup>. In effect, a scheme for classifying the population first devised by the Austrian Bureau of Statistics for the census of 1890 was still felt to be a reasonably appropriate tool for analysing society forty years later.

The classification system used in the Austrian censuses had originally developed from the divisions in a conscription order of 1804, based on the feudal concept of estate. Technical progress in the computing of results, which allowed an almost limitless number of categories and sub-categories to be used, and the desire to put the census on a "scientific basis", so that it would reflect the changes which the industrial revolution was bringing to the economic profile of society, led to a major change of format in 1890<sup>6</sup>. The influence of previous practice lingered only in the grouping together of people in the army, state service and the liberal professions - the so-called "notables" (Ger. Honoratioren), who had been allowed to vote in the third curia irrespective of property qualifications - but this category was made far more amorphous by the addition of a miscellany of "other professions". The last three censuses before the First World War divided society vertically into the following basic economic groupings: A/ Agriculture, forestry and fishing; B/ Industry and handicrafts; C/ Commerce and transport; and D/ "Other professions"<sup>7</sup>.

In 1921, the Czechoslovak State Office of Statistics created separate categories for state service, the army and the liberal professions, and <sup>for</sup> "Other professions", and in 1930 a further category was devised for "Domestic and other personal service". As in the Austrian census, these broad groupings were referred to as "classes" (Klassen or třídy). However, contemporaries were quick to criticise this terminology; one sociologist noted "Such

classes, although necessary, and indeed desirable, from a statistical point of view, do not correspond precisely to the realities of social stratification"<sup>8</sup>. Even the apparently unambiguous new class D included not only members of the various recognised professions, but also actors, musicians, singers, dancers, theatre personnel and the owners of cinemas and dance halls, whilst the rubric "Other professions" embraced people living on public charity, occupations which were "peu honorables et déshonorantes, chiromanciennes, saltimbanques, musiciens ambulantes, tziganes nomades, filles publiques et propriétaires de maisons de prostitution" as well as people of private means, or living from pensions<sup>9</sup>.

More revealing as a statement on the nature of social stratification was the census's categorisation of "occupational standing". The Austrian census of 1910 had recognised six horizontal divisions within each economic "class" - the self-employed, tenants, white-collar employees (Angestellten), workers, apprentices and day labourers - and these were reproduced in the first Czechoslovak census of 1921. Reservations were expressed about the social validity of two of these groups. Antonín Boháč, a leading Czech statistician of the inter-war period, explained in a preamble to the census that the concept "day labourer", if taken in its literal sense, was now somewhat anachronistic. In industry, the distinction between skilled and unskilled workers was particularly significant, and the former were, therefore, to be classed as "workers" in the new Czechoslovak census, even if

they were paid by the day. In addition, Boháč claimed that the distinction made by the Austrians between white-collar employees and workers was somewhat inaccurate, since many lower-ranking employees, like shop assistants, or technicians, had hitherto been classified as workers, although their work was of a non-manual nature. In 1921 only minor adjustments were possible, and this problem remained unsolved<sup>10</sup>.

The most important innovation of the 1930 classification of "occupational standing" was the creation of a separate census category for such lower-ranking non-manual employees (zřizenci). Explanatory notes claimed that the growth of mass production, and the expansion of service industries, meant that there was an increasing number of specialist and supervisory jobs which brought their practitioners higher wages and greater job security than ordinary manual workers. These specialist workers were said to form a new social stratum, acutely aware of the social differentiation between themselves and manual workers. The change also brought the census into line with social insurance legislation, which already distinguished between zřizenci and manual workers. In disputed cases, the kind of social insurance received was actually to be the decisive factor in clarifying someone's "occupational standing"<sup>11</sup>. This development in the census classification reflected the institutionalisation of the division between manual and non-manual workers, which was perhaps the most crucial social distinction in inter-war Czech society.

The preamble to the 1930 census enumerated in some detail the various categories of "occupational standing" now recognised by the State Office of Statistics. The first category, the self-employed (samostatní), comprised the owners or joint-owners of industrial, agricultural and other concerns, members of the liberal professions, and anyone else who was not dependent on an employer. In effect, this included not only people from every branch of the economy, but also from both ends of the social spectrum.- a self-employed businessman, in the terms of the census, might equally well be someone with a fruit stall in the street, or a hot-chestnut seller, as an archetypal capitalist figure<sup>12</sup>. Tenants (nájemci), category two, included those who earned their living independently, but on rented land, or in rented premises. The majority were tenant farmers, but toll keepers are another example given. These two categories were often counted together in computations of the census statistics; although an amorphous social group, they shared one characteristic - they were not covered by a state pension scheme<sup>13</sup>.

The third category, officials (úředníci), corresponded to a social stereotype which reappears in many different kinds of source material. It was defined in terms taken straight from the Social Insurance Act of 1929, as comprising anyone whose job title included the word "official", for example a konceptní úředník, or draftsman, as well as teachers in elementary and grammar schools, priests, doctors who worked for the state, army officers, and "anyone at all whose conditions of service form the

basis for work of a primarily non-manual kind"<sup>14</sup>. In fact, within this division could be found the managing director of a large bank, or even the shoe magnate, Tomáš Baťa, an employee of a limited company of the same name, as well as the minor civil servant of a type immortalised in Poláček's The House in the Suburbs, or lauded by the political party programmes<sup>15</sup>.

The fourth category, lower-ranking non-manual employees (zřizenci), now entered separately from manual workers, was described as comprising lesser specialist employees - game keepers, chief mechanics, shop assistants, window dressers, commercial travellers, nurses, pilots, cinema film-projectionists, and anyone employed to oversee the work of others. This social category, like "officials", is a social stereotype which appears in other kinds of source material, usually with the implication that the employees thus designated were to be regarded as distinct from members of the working class. Both zřizenci and officials were in receipt of the superior state scheme of pension insurance<sup>16</sup>.

The manual working class was divided by the census into "workers", "apprentices", "day labourers" and "home workers". Workers (dělníci) were described as those employed as wage labour to undertake tasks which were of a primarily manual nature, whose jobs did not involve directing the work of others. From the ranks of agricultural wage-earners, only deputátníci and čeledí, who were taken on as permanent or semi-permanent employees,

were included<sup>17</sup>. Craftsmen and skilled factory workers were also classed as dělníci, as were office employees engaged in manual tasks, common soldiers, and domestics who maintained their own households. The separate classification of apprentices is a reminder that the guild system was not abolished until 1859, and that formal training as an apprentice was still, in the inter-war years, a necessary pre-requisite for a very wide range of occupations (including, for example, the grocery trade, or being a waiter). The distinction made between "workers" and "day labourers" is significant because of the implication that the latter were of a lower status than the former. Day labourers comprised unskilled workers in industry and trade, seasonal workers in agriculture, irrespective of their level of skill, and any other casual labourers. Finally, the 1930 census also created a separate category for home workers, a reflection of their peculiar position between the categories of "self-employed" and "workers"<sup>18</sup>.

In the Czechoslovak censuses, following a pattern set in Habsburg times, families took on the class of the main bread-winner. There were separate sub-groups for those family members who aided him in his work (a particularly numerous category in agriculture and small businesses), and for those who did not themselves work. A further category within the family was that of domestic servants; those servants whose jobs required no specialist training were not awarded the dignity of separate occupational status, if they lived in their employer's



household. The statistician, Antonín Boháč, explained:

ils vivent, eux-aussi, des revenus du travail de leur employeur, mais ils subviennent seuls à leurs besoins en se chargeant des travaux qui sont nécessaires à la bonne conduite du ménage. 19

Servants in other countries in the inter-war period had a very low social status, as is witnessed by the United States census, which placed them in the lowest possible category, along with unskilled workers. . . However, the attitude of the Czechoslovak census, in classifying them as dependents of their employer, is positively feudal. Josef Macek, one of the main social theorists of the inter-war Republic, wrote in 1925 in his The Foundations of Social Policy:

Servant girls' working conditions retain at least some features of the former patriarchal relationship. Some employers still live under the illusion that they are doing the girls, and mankind, a favour by supporting a servant or two. They demand a particular kind of relationship, based on humble gratitude, the kissing of hands, etc. 20

It would seem, therefore, that the censuses may have provided an accurate picture of the position of domestic servants in society, and other sources do suggest that they formed a particularly underprivileged social group<sup>21</sup>.

Overall, the Czechoslovak censuses offered an "official" view of a society in which there was a somewhat diverse working class, a potential "under class" of unskilled and casual labour, and a non-manual work force divided according to level of skill and education. They failed, however, to locate the economic bourgeoisie, who were

concealed amongst the ranks of the self-employed and "officials". This omission has been much criticised by present-day Czech and Slovak academics, but significantly, amongst contemporaries, the census's description of social groupings aroused no real controversy<sup>22</sup>. It was the definition of nationality which provoked serious criticism at the time. There were endless discussions about the meaning of "mother tongue", and whether it was indeed fair, or accurate, to equate nationality with language<sup>23</sup>. In any consideration of perceptions of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia it is salutary to recall that commentators of this period were often concerned with other dimensions of stratification than the purely social.

### III Social legislation

A more rewarding area than the census for the study of official perceptions of class is to be found in certain aspects of social and employment legislation. The tendency for such legislation to institutionalise basic social divisions was hardly confined to Czechoslovakia; welfare provision in Great Britain before the Second World War was concerned with the problems of one group, which became, in effect, a statutory working class, whilst in France the Code du Travail recognised not a specific class as such, but rather the "distinction between the intellectual and non-intellectual qualities of the white-collar and manual workers respectively"<sup>24</sup>. The latter pattern was, and still is, common in continental Europe, not least in inter-war Czechoslovakia.

The legislative distinction made between manual and non-manual labour was actually inherited by the Czechoslovak Republic from the Habsburgs. In Cisleithania, social and employment legislation had recognised four distinct categories of workers: manual workers, miners, white-collar employees and government employees<sup>25</sup>. The separate provisions made for miners and government employees were, by 1918, something of a historical anachronism, a reflection of the lingering influence of the social ranks and orders of estate society.

Miners had traditionally been treated differently from other manual workers, mainly because they formed very close-knit communities, and had a long guild tradition. They had organised their own self-help friendly societies since the sixteenth century, and in 1854 the government granted these so-called "fraternal treasuries" (bratrské pokladny or Bruderkassen) legal sanction. Each mine owner had to ensure that his workers had access to such a bratrská pokladna, which provided insurance against sickness, invalidity and old age. Social insurance legislation was only extended to other categories of worker in the 1880s, and then only in the limited form of sickness and accident benefits. At the time of Czechoslovak independence, therefore, miners were the only manual workers to receive old-age and invalidity pensions, and their widows were also unique in receiving pensions. Miners also benefited from a shorter statutory working day than other manual workers, nine hours in comparison to eleven<sup>26</sup>.

Within the Habsburg Empire, civil servants had a particularly high social status. The bureaucracy was long the accustomed career for sons of the nobility and the upper bourgeoisie, and gained something of a caste character<sup>27</sup>. Civil servants' rights to pensions had begun as early as 1781, when pensions were first awarded to high bureaucrats on their retirement through old age or invalidity. Although the social exclusivity of the bureaucracy was somewhat diluted by expansion in the late nineteenth century, it retained its privileged position with respect to pension provisions. A law of 1907, for example, allowed a civil servant to retire on full salary if he had completed thirty-five years of service<sup>28</sup>.

The distinctive treatment of miners and civil servants in the provisions of social and employment legislation continued under the Republic. Civil servants' conditions of employment, if they received the so-called definitiva (in other words, if they had established posts), included security of tenure, the right to receive full salary during an illness of up to one year's duration, and the pension provision received above. It is hardly surprising that the social status of state employment was high, and that a secure niche in state service was a favoured goal for children of the lower social strata<sup>29</sup>.

Miners, too, continued to have a separate scheme for social insurance, which provided them with superior benefits to those enjoyed by other manual workers, and

underlined their position amongst the aristocracy of labour. When the wholesale revision of social legislation was considered in the early years of the Republic, the miners successfully defended their right to special consideration because of the "exceptional, difficult and dangerous" nature of their work<sup>30</sup>. A series of miners' strikes in 1921 and 1922 included separate insurance provisions amongst their demands, and the economic weight which the miners could exert is reflected in the provisions of the 1922 Act on miners' insurance. Miners could, for example, claim old age pensions at fifty five, ten years before other manual workers. Their widows, unlike those of other manual workers, had an unconditional right to receive a pension<sup>31</sup>. When this was discussed in committee, Dr Viktor Haas, the miners' representative, claimed that miners' wives did not go out to work, because they were fully occupied with household tasks, and that they should not be expected to do so if widowed<sup>32</sup>. Invalidity pensions could be claimed by face workers who had lost forty per cent of their earning capacity, and by surface workers who had lost fifty per cent of their earning capacity; the proportion for other manual workers was seventy per cent. Such distinctions may seem to tell us very little about class, but they do confirm the continued existence of estate and guild traditions which could prove antithetical to the formation of all-inclusive classes.

Even more important was the recognition, in social and employment legislation, of a broad societal divide bet-

ween manual and non-manual workers, reflecting implicit assumptions about the different needs and rights of the two basic kinds of labour. The first step towards the legal definition of these two groups took place in the 1880s, with the enactment of social legislation intended primarily for the industrial working class. The Austrian response to the growing workers' movement followed the pattern set by Bismarck: first anti-socialist laws in 1886, and then an attempt to appease the workers with accident insurance legislation, in 1887, and sickness insurance, in 1888. Agricultural workers, home workers and servants were excluded from both kinds of insurance, since socialism posed no real threat amongst them<sup>33</sup>.

White-collar employees could be insured voluntarily under the provisions of the 1888 workers' sickness insurance act. However, in 1906, they were granted invalidity, old-age and widow's pension insurance, whilst an act of 1910 gave employees in "higher service" (ve vyšších službách) conditions of employment, including holidays with pay, which were vastly superior to those enjoyed by manual workers<sup>34</sup>. In 1918, therefore, white-collar employees had a privileged position in comparison with manual workers in terms of both social and employment insurance.

At the inception of the new republic, in the prevailing spirit of radical democracy, it seemed that a new uniform approach to such legislation, overriding social divisions, might be possible. Legislation for an eight-hour day, enacted in December 1918, applied to both

manual and non-manual workers alike, and compulsory sickness insurance was extended to all categories of employees the following year<sup>35</sup>. In October 1920, a group of Social Democratic deputies placed a proposal for workers' old-age and invalidity pensions before the National Assembly. A committee was set up to consider the implications of such a scheme, and of social insurance in general; its terms of reference suggested that the Ministry of Social Welfare was actually contemplating the creation of an "all-national agency for general social insurance"<sup>36</sup>.

The forces of establishment were quick to respond. Social attitudes were too deeply ingrained, and existing institutions too deeply entrenched, for the kind of sweeping change initially envisaged. Lip-service might be paid to the idea of unified social insurance provision, but those experts consulted by the committee of enquiry were ready enough to point out the pitfalls in the scheme. Dr Emil Hendrich, of the white-collar employees' General Pension Institute, for instance, assumed that manual workers could neither afford, nor have the right to expect, the level of treatment afforded to white-collar employees. He claimed in his report:

Although it is not yet known what contributions will be made ~~by manual workers~~ it is certain that it will be financially impossible to give their dependents, and in particular their widows, the same high awards as are guaranteed by the white-collar employees' pension scheme.

There is a further difference in the concept of invalidity. The scheme for white-collar employees recognises professional invalidity... In contrast, the workers' scheme will have to operate from the basis of the inability to earn at all. 37

Hendrich also predicted public protest at the idea of a unified insurance scheme. This warning was justified; the committee of enquiry was at once inundated by hundreds of letters and petitions seeking to influence its deliberations against such a decision<sup>38</sup>.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that manual workers were eventually awarded separate, and less extensive, social benefits than those enjoyed by white-collar employees. Dr Evžen Štern, one of the Social Democratic Party's leading experts on social policy, claimed that legislation for the latter was based on the idea that "the transition from active service to pension should not mean a complete reversal in the economic life of the person insured", whereas manual workers' insurance was intended simply to remove "the undeserved blackest poverty, which can hurl the individual worker, or even a whole family, into physical and moral poverty"<sup>39</sup>.

Manual workers received an old-age pension at sixty five, irrespective of sex, whereas white-collar employees retired at sixty, if male, and fifty five, if female<sup>40</sup>. The basic pension guaranteed by law was 500 crowns a year for manual workers, whilst white-collar employees were entitled to 3,600 crowns minimum. The widows of white-collar employees received pensions automatically, whereas workers' widows had a right to a pension only if they were over sixty five, or invalids, or had the care of two or more children under the age of seventeen. When this particular provision was discussed in committee, the opinion was expressed that workers' wives were used



to working to earn their own living, and often did so during their husbands' lifetimes, so they required no special provision for widowhood<sup>41</sup>. The surviving children of a white-collar employee could receive an orphan's pension if they were under the age of eighteen, or twenty four if they were undertaking higher education. Workers' children were only supported until the age of sixteen, with no mention of the possibility that they, too, might wish to continue their education at a secondary school or university. All of these provisions reflect a very great qualitative difference in the perceived needs of manual workers and white-collar employees, and of their appropriate social station.

The concept of invalidity was also vastly different for manual workers and white-collar employees. For the latter, invalidity signified professional invalidity, or the inability to pursue one's own particular profession. Workers, however, even if skilled in a particular trade, were not allowed to claim a pension automatically when illness prevented them from pursuing it. They only received a pension if their earning capacity was reduced by two thirds - which for most meant, in effect, if they were reduced to beggary. In denying to manual workers that professional particularism which it accepted as a natural right amongst salaried employees, the law implicitly underlined the overriding importance of their common identity as workers.

The kind of distinction made in social legislation between manual and non-manual workers also existed in more general conditions of employment. White-collar employees had been given considerable legislative protection even before the First World War. The 1910 Act, covering minimum conditions for employees in "higher service", was revised in 1934. White-collar employees were now entitled to a fortnight's holiday with pay, rising to three weeks after five years and four weeks after fifteen years of service; they also had the right to a minimum of six weeks' notice, extending up to five months after twenty years' service, and to at least six weeks' absence on full pay if they were unable to work because of sickness or an accident<sup>42</sup>. There was no such comprehensive code of legislation for manual workers. The laws governing their basic conditions of employment made no mention of the statutory right to receive full pay during sickness, nor, initially, did they provide holidays with pay. The period of notice for most workers was fourteen days; participation in a strike was regarded as a breach of contract, and could lead to summary dismissal<sup>43</sup>.

It was a matter of pride for the Czechoslovak Republic that the legal right to receive holidays with pay was actually extended to certain categories of manual workers during the 1920s. In keeping with tradition, miners were treated separately from other workers; an Act of 1921 gave those who had completed one year of service five days' paid leave, and this was increased to a maxi-

mun of twelve days after fifteen years of service<sup>44</sup>. In 1925 other manual workers (with the exception of seasonal workers, home workers and day labourers in agriculture) were given the right to six days' leave after one year of uninterrupted service for the same concern, which rose to seven days after ten years' service, and eight days after fifteen years' service. The increase was more apparent than real, since Sundays and feast days could be included in this leave<sup>45</sup>. Even a long-serving manual worker was, moreover, still entitled to less holiday than a recently employed white-collar worker.

The debates in the Chamber of Deputies which preceded the 1925 Act were very revealing of the social attitudes which influenced this legislation. The superior treatment afforded to white-collar workers in their conditions of employment was traditionally justified by reference to the "higher", or "intellectual", nature of their work. In order to defend manual workers' right to holidays with pay, physical exhaustion was not a sufficient excuse. Alois Tučný, the National Socialist trades union leader who proposed the Act, suggested that many employers did not distinguish between the manual worker and inanimate merchandise; both were regarded as purchasable commodities. The worker was of interest to them only in so far as his labour could be put to use in various industrial processes. Tučný stressed that the worker was also a human being, with his own individual needs and, more important, that he too used his brain in

discharging his responsibilities at work:

If a brainworker needs a vacation, to protect him from premature paralysis of the nerves, then a manual worker needs protection on two accounts, for physical work is not possible, in this time of multi-faceted technical advance, without brain activity too... 46

Given such qualitative differences in treatment in both social and employment legislation, it was obviously very important for the legislators to delimit precisely the division between manual work and mental work. The Austrian Act of 1906, which awarded comprehensive social insurance to white-collar workers, gave only an imprecise definition of the category of employees for whom its provisions were intended. This led to the de facto exclusion of many lower-ranking employees including, for instance, shop assistants. An early ruling in the Czechoslovak High Court explained that pre-war practice was based on the assumption that:

a shop assistant cannot be conceded the status of an official, neither does his work consist primarily of mental tasks. His main activity is to serve customers, and to sell goods at prices already marked by the owner of the shop. It is immaterial that he might also prepare bills, or conduct minor correspondence, or inform the factory of the state of the shop, and request stock... An activity which is primarily mental is one in which the greatest part of the activity is undertaken by the brain, by thoughts, which are then expressed externally in written or oral form. This kind of activity is of only minor importance for a shop assistant, because of the general character of his work. 47

The Czechoslovak authorities, however, felt that the Austrian definition of white-collar work tended to be too narrow, and wished to confirm the status of lower-

ranking employees (zřizenci) as something more than manual workers. Dr Jan Gallas, director of the newly-formed General Pensions Institute, explained in 1919 that the "democratic spirit of the new age" demanded that full pension rights should be extended to everyone except "workers engaged directly in manual labour, day-labourers and apprentices... servants and farm labourers"<sup>48</sup>.

The initial parliamentary proposal, in 1920, for a revision of the Austrian Pensions Act, suggested extending the provisions of the act to cover "skilled labour in industrial production, engaged in responsible, self-contained work, and not directly involved in the production of goods, for example pattern makers, or tracers in the engineering industry"<sup>49</sup>. When the revised act was eventually drafted, it was phrased in more general terms than this, and was to apply to:

§1

(1) ...anyone in the Czechoslovak Republic over the age of sixteen, who is in a condition of service, provided that he is not a worker, or an apprentice, and that his work is not of a primarily subordinate nature, like the duties of a celed, a day labourer or the like.

(2) The following, therefore, are subject to compulsory insurance:

a/ employees who primarily undertake mental work, or who regularly oversee the work of others, such as foremen in a workshop, or a building site... stewards, gamekeepers, etc.  
b/ employees in offices, typing pools, shops, stores, transport and other concerns, who undertake sales and other higher services in the meaning of the law of 16 January 1910... and also, all employees of advocates and notaries' offices. 50

Amongst those workers expressly excluded from the provisions of the Act were the employees of itinerant (kocovní) theatres and orchestra, even if they had permanent jobs. Presumably such work was considered to be of a subordinate or inferior nature, even if it was not manual.

The wording of the 1920 Pensions' Act proved, in practice, to be open to interpretation, and there were many disputed cases. In 1924, for instance, the Czechoslovak High Court considered the suit of one Josef Lestinský, a chauffeur from Brno, whose employers claimed that a chauffeur was not a "mentally active" (duševně činný) worker. At the initial stage of the enquiry, the provincial administrative board in Brno had ascertained that Lestinský not only washed and cleaned the car, but also drove it, and had to maintain it in good working order, undertaking the **necessary repairs himself**. They had therefore found that "because of the particular care, skill and presence of mind required by this activity, it can be considered to be primarily mental in the meaning of the Pensions' Act" - a chauffeur, after all, needed a certain amount of technical knowledge, and had to pass a driving test. The judgement was reversed by the High Court, which declared that even the simplest task of a day labourer demanded "care, skill and presence of mind". Driving a car, repairing it, and keeping it in good working order were said to require no special mental powers, and Lestinský's work was likened to that of a coachman in former times<sup>51</sup>. Obviously, in

the minds of the judges, the manual, and potentially dirty, nature of the job far outweighed any technical skill required in its execution.

Judgements were not always consistent. In 1926, for example, an assistant in a stationer's shop was declared eligible for pension insurance. Her responsibilities for sales were claimed to require "knowledge, training and alacrity", even though the prices were already marked on the goods which she sold. In the case of Lestinský, qualities not dissimilar to these were summarily dismissed as pertaining even to casual unskilled work. The deciding factor seems to have been that the assistant worked in a large establishment, where other people were employed to undertake the strictly manual tasks of fetching and carrying<sup>52</sup>. In 1932, a certain J.S., who worked in a shop which sold three kinds of smoked meat, four kinds of salami, and a variety of other smoked meat products, was found ineligible for pension insurance because "to master the prices and qualities of these kinds of goods does not require any particular specialist knowledge or training"<sup>53</sup>. The main difference between him and the lady stationer would appear to lie not in actual level of skill and training, but in the fact that employment in a stationer's shop was clean and respectable, and did not directly involve manual work.

In 1929, the Pensions' Act was further revised, and it was found desirable to enumerate in very great detail

the specific professions which were felt to be deserving of superior insurance benefits.

(1) On the basis of a contract of service, the following are subject to compulsory insurance, and insured according to the provisions of this law:

1 Officials (draftsmen, trade, judicial, office, workshop, in the free professions, private secretaries etc.), private teachers, tutors and the like, as well as persons employed by the church, or religious societies, or employees whose work is a preparation for such professions.

2 Any office employees, with the exception of persons employed as cleaners, janitors, to announce visitors, as errand boys (except in financial institutions where they carry valuables), or to duplicate documents by a chemical, mechanical, or some other such means, even if they undertake other categories of work, along with these main tasks...

3 Employees in the editorial offices, administration and preparation of journals and other publications, employees of theatres, permanent orchestras, permanent entertainments concerns, permanent sports teams, firms organising exhibitions, and institutions concerned with education, the upbringing of children, or medical or charitable care, as well as doctors and dental technicians; but excluding all persons employed as cleaners, janitors, to announce visitors, as errand boys, or in the duplication of documents... even if they undertake other such work along with their main tasks.

4 Employees who undertake work according to the definition of the law on commercial employees of 16 January 1910...

5 Commercial travellers, representatives and agents, even when employed on commission.

6 Employees who are primarily, and not simply temporarily employed  
 a/ to assign tasks to workers, or as overseers, without taking part in the work themselves, except in so far as this is necessitated by their function, e.g. foremen... gamekeepers, stewards...  
 b/ to make specialist decisions about receiving industrial or imported goods, or their storage or distribution.  
 c/ in artistic work or drawing, providing that this is not merely mechanical...reproduction.

(2) Further subject to compulsory insurance...are persons... who are employed permanently... to undertake work of a primarily mental nature. 54



From this it can be seen that the concept "higher service" was associated with certain kinds of profession - for example, with "officials" or "commercial assistants" in the broadest sense, and with certain kinds of workplace, notably offices, editorial offices, theatres, schools and hospitals. Workers in manufacturing industry were considered eligible for the higher form of social insurance if their work was of an artistic nature, or if it involved overseeing the work of others, rather than actually taking part in the manufacturing process themselves; a distinction somewhat reminiscent of Halbwachs's definition of the middle classes as those operating on "living people", rather than "inert material"<sup>55</sup>. The crucial distinction, in cases of dispute, was always whether the job in question could reasonably be described as non-manual.

The distinction made in law between manual work and mental work, with the latter identified as a higher form of service (vyšší služba) was, in many ways, contrary to the spirit of Masaryk's teachings. As later chapters will illustrate, Masaryk's ideology of class had great influence on consciously articulated perceptions of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia<sup>56</sup>. Suffice it here to quote from his work of 1898, The Social Question:

For the most part, so-called brainwork is neither higher nor more valuable than the tasks undertaken by a worker. Much intellectual work is mechanical, stereotyped and does not require any real thought, or at least no more than that exercised by an ordinary worker. 57

Passages such as this discouraged the down-grading of manual work, and were readily paraphrased when people were intent on expressing what they ought to think<sup>58</sup>. The evidence from social and employment legislation, however, suggests that implicit prejudices inherited from Habsburg times remained very strong in inter-war Czechoslovakia.

As well as underpinning the distinction between the two basic kinds of labour, social and employment legislation also gave rise to a second, and far less clearly articulated, social divide. Certain categories of workers, like seasonal labourers in agriculture or servants, were often excluded from the provisions of such legislation. The scope of each measure was different, and some were more all-embracing than others, so it is difficult to piece together an unambiguous picture of an officially-perceived "under class". Nonetheless, there is a certain suggestion that some people were felt to be undeserving, for whatever reason, of the level of social protection afforded to the majority of the population.

One instance is the legislation for an eight-hour day, often pictured as the high point of inter-war employment legislation. This did not apply to workers who lived in the household of their employers; servants, čeledí, and other such employees, whose work traditionally lacked social prestige, were only guaranteed a maximum of twelve hours rest each day. It was explained that their employ-

ment consisted of "being on the ready, rather than unbroken periods of work"<sup>59</sup>.

An even more striking example of welfare legislation which excluded large sections of the community is to be found in the provisions made for the unemployed. When unemployment assistance was first introduced in December 1918, as a short-term response to demobilisation, it was a relatively all-embracing benefit. Nevertheless, agricultural labourers and servants were implicitly denied financial assistance, which was to be paid only to ex-servicemen and those members of the unemployed who had previously made contributions to a sickness insurance scheme. Just before sickness insurance was extended to all categories of employees, in the spring of 1919, a revised Unemployment Assistance Act categorically stated that workers in agriculture and forestry and domestic servants were not to receive unemployment pay<sup>60</sup>.

The initial scheme, which provided assistance rather than insurance, was never seen as more than a temporary measure, and the idea of state support for the unemployed soon came under heavy attack. Even socialist deputies were willing to give credence to the idea that unemployment pay encouraged the work-shy<sup>61</sup>. The problem of providing some measure of unemployment relief at a low cost, whilst ensuring that benefits went only to the deserving unemployed, was eventually solved by making over the administration of unemployment insurance to the trades unions. Benefits, paid partly by the unions

and partly by the state, went only to union members of at least three months standing, who had made the necessary voluntary contributions<sup>62</sup>. Explicitly, this scheme excluded only seasonal workers, unless the government of the day made a special concession, and allowed them to pay through their unions. (Seasonal workers were not generally considered to be unemployed when they were not working, and there was a strong sentiment that they should save from their earnings, however meagre, to cover necessary periods of inactivity<sup>63</sup>.) However, its provisions were limited to union members, which in practice tended to mean skilled workers and white-collar employees, rather than unskilled or casual labour.

There are further examples of discrimination in social and employment legislation. Accident insurance, for example, did not extend to agricultural labourers, even if they worked with dangerous machinery, and the statutory provision of holidays with pay did not apply to seasonal agricultural labourers or home workers. The justification for excluding some workers from these and other social benefits varied from act to act, and included cost to the employer, "technical difficulties", and the desire to ensure that assistance went only to people who "deserve and need it"<sup>64</sup>. There was never an officially defined "under class" of "undeserving poor", although there was a long tradition, enshrined in the trade code (Živnostenský řád) of regarding certain types of work as "inferior"<sup>65</sup>.

According to Lev Winter, a leading Social Democrat, and an expert in this field, social policy in inter-war Czechoslovakia was intended to benefit the "weak in human society", and to help them cope with social crises. It was intended, moreover, to encourage the consciousness of human dignity, and of the value of labour, so that people received from society not charity, but benefits to which they had every right<sup>66</sup>. In practice, it is clear that superior social benefits were often paid to white-collar employees, whose salaries and conditions of employment make it difficult to imagine them as "socially weak". Unskilled and casual labourers, or self-employed peasant farmers living at subsistence level, were excluded from many welfare benefits, thereby reinforcing their underprivileged status<sup>67</sup>.

#### IV The živnostenský řád<sup>68</sup>

One category of occupation was defined in some detail in law - that of the tradesman (živnostník). The code of practice for trade and industry, known as the živnostenský řád, which had come into operation when the guilds were abolished in 1859, continued to regulate the workings of business concerns very closely. It was almost as concerned to ~~delimit~~ those businesses which were not governed by its provisions as it was to lay down regulations for those which fell within its legislative scope. Thus a farmer who took over the processing of his own agricultural produce did not require a licence to operate. Transport concerns, businesses operating in

the field of public entertainment, financial institutions of all kinds, independent educational establishments and medical clinics were all excluded from the provisions of the code. A dentist was not to be regarded as a tradesman, but a dental technologist was.

Trade concerns within the meaning of the code were divided into three main types, all of which required to be licensed. Concessional trades (živnosti koncesované), about forty five in number, needed special permission to operate, either because of the potentially dangerous nature of the work involved, for example businesses specialising in the installation of gas equipment, or because it was felt desirable to limit the numbers of such concerns operating in any one district. In artisanal concerns (živnosti řemeslné), documentary proof was required of the completion of a two- or four-year apprenticeship, as well as at least three years of post-apprenticeship training, before someone could set up as an independent tradesman. Free trades (živnosti svobodné), on the other hand, did not require any documentary proof of aptitude, except that people working in the grocery trade needed at least five years experience as an assistant before they could open a business in their own name.

Tradesmen not only required a license, or concession, to operate (and this could be denied to them if they had a previous criminal record, or if they were state employees, and the proposed trade did not accord with "the seriousness and dignity of their office"), they were also

under obligation to join the trade organisation corresponding to their particular kind of business. The aims of these trade organisations, as laid down by the Živnostenský řád, included "the cultivation of a feeling of solidarity, the maintenance and promotion of the reputation of the estate (stav)"<sup>69</sup>. Such regulations were obviously intended to give tradesmen a sense of occupational pride, and solidarity as a social group.

## V Conclusion

This chapter has examined official perceptions of the main lines of social division in inter-war Czechoslovakia. Perhaps the most significant factor to emerge is the importance of the divide between manual and non-manual labour, and the tendency to regard the latter as being "service of a higher nature", a term which itself encapsulates the social prejudices of the time. It has also been noted that the census recognised a category of employees below the level of the worker (dělník), and, moreover, that some types of employment tended to be excluded from the full range of social benefits. A tentative hypothesis can therefore be advanced that there was a kind of "under class" in inter-war Czechoslovak society. Finally, it has been noted that the regulations surrounding the running of certain kinds of business were such as to encourage in tradesmen a sense of group identity. All these points will be developed in further chapters.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. The evidence which is presented here casts no real light on those social attitudes which were specific to either the Czechs or the Slovaks.
2. Sbírka zákonu a nařízení státu Československého, iii (1920), p. 265.
3. Slovník veřejného práva Československého, vol. 4 (Brno, 1938), p. 184.
4. Antonín Boháč, "První všeobecné sčítání lidu v Československé republice" in Československý statistický vestník, ii (1920), p. 114.
5. Sčítání lidu v republice československé ze dne 1 prosince 1930, vol. 2, part 1 (Prague, 1935), p. 17\*.
6. For a background to the Austrian census, see Pavla Horská, "Kategorie 'samostatný' v rakouské statistice povolání" in ČSČH, xxx 198, p. 547-579 passim; and Sčítání lidu v republice československé ze dne 15 února 1921, vol. 2, part 4 (Prague, 1927), p. i-v.
7. Ibid., p. v.
8. Karel Galla, Třídy ve společnosti a třídní boj (Prague, 1930), p. 6.
9. Recensement de la population dans la république tchécoslovaque au 15 février 1921, vol. 2, part 4 (Prague, 1927), p. 75\*. This is a French version of a work cited above as Sčítání...1921.
10. Ibid., p. 84\*.
11. Sčítání...1930, p. 17\*.
12. Ibid., p. 13; for criticism of this census category see František Fajfr, "Nivelisace dnešní společnost" in Čin, vi (1934), p. 1014.
13. Although a law was passed in 1925 no.148/1925, approving in theory that the self-employed should have a state pension scheme, this law was never, in practice, implemented; see Kynek Pelc, Sociální lékařství (Prague, 1937), p. 367.
14. Sčítání...1930, p. 13\*.
15. Karel Poláček, Dům na předměstí (Prague, 1928); see also chapter 3, p. 109-112.
16. See p. 72-76.
17. Sčítání...1930, p. 13\*.
18. Ibid., p. 13\*-14\*.



19. Recensement...1921, p. 1 .
20. Josef Macek, Základy sociální politiky (Prague, 1925), p. 170; for an account of U.S. census practice, see Marwick, Class..., p. 61.
21. See below, p. 77 and chapter 5, p. 209.
22. For present-day criticism, see, for example, Slovensko, vol.3, part 1 (Bratislava, 1974), p. 405, which complains of the censuses "apologetic character".
23. Debates about the definition of nationality can be found in the official journal of the State Office of Statistics, Československý statistický obzor, and in Národnostní obzor, which was devoted to nationality problems. For a critical view of government attitudes, which contains a comment on census practice, see Emanuel Rádl, Válka Čechů s Němci (Prague, 1928).
24. Marwick, op.cit., p. 63-71, 60.
25. Czechoslovak social legislation was based on provisions inherited from the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire.
26. For background information on miners' insurance, see Jaroslav Houser, Vývoj hornického pojištění (Prague, 1960); also Zdeněk Deyl, "K problematice sociálního vývoje Československa v letech 1918-1938" in ČSCH, xx (1972), p. 678.
27. Jászi, The Dissolution..., p. 164.
28. Deyl, "K problematice...", p. 683; Mertl, Byrokracie..., p. 172, 174-176.
29. Slovník veřejného práva, vol. 4, p. 402; Mertl, op.cit., p. 239.
30. SÚA Praha MSP, D2g 1920-1927, 7636/1921.
31. Leonard Bianchi, Dejiny státu a práva na území Československa v období kapitalismu, vol. 2 (Bratislava, 1971), p. 242; the Miners Insurance Act can be found in Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, v (1922), p. 1027-1042.
32. SÚA Praha MSP, 2g/K1 1921-1924, 8151.
33. Deset let Československé republiky, vol. 1 (Prague, 1928), p. 344-345.
34. Ibid., p. 345; Slovník veřejného práva, vol. 4, p. 378.
35. Twenty Years of Social Welfare in the Czechoslovak

- Republic Prague, 1928 , p. 17.
36. SÚA Praha MSP, D2g/S 1921-1927, 6883.
  37. SÚA Praha MSP, D2g/K3, 5487.
  38. Some of which are quoted in chapter 5 below, p. 197-8.
  39. Evžen Štern, "Deset let naší sociální politiky" in Sociální revue, x (1929), p. 17; "O sociální pojištění dělnické" in Akademie, xxxi (1929), p. 148.
  40. Details of the social insurance Acts are taken from Československá vlastivěda, vol. 6 (Prague, 1930), p. 118-135 and Bloss, Labor legislation..., passim.
  41. SÚA Praha MSP, 2g/K1 1921-1924, 8151. The age at which workers' widows received pensions was reduced to sixty in 1928.
  42. For details see František Vážný, "Nový zákon o soukromých zaměstnancích" in Sociální revue, xv (1934), p. 295-307.
  43. The conditions of work for manual workers were laid down in the živnostenský řád code for trade and industry , or the čelední řád code for agricultural labourers of the province in which they lived. These codes were modified by specific acts of legislation such as the eight-hour day, which was enacted in 1918. Collective contracts often made provision for conditions of employment which were above the legal minimum requirements. See also Deyl, "K problematice...", p. 687.
  44. Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, iv (1921), p. 1095-1096.
  45. Which meant that long-serving workers received more pay for their annual leave, but still had no more than one calendar week free; see Rudolf Taverle, Zákony o dovolených zaměstnanců (Prague, 1925), p. 7.
  46. Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích poslanecké sněmovny Národního shromáždění republiky Československé, 336th session, 21 March 1925, p. 1481.
  47. Sociální revue, ii (1920), p. 187.
  48. Jan Gallas, "K novelisace zákona o pensijním pojištění" in Sociální revue, i (1919), p. 13-14.
  49. Sociální revue, vi (1925), p. 398.
  50. Sbírka zákonů a nařízení, iii (1920), p. 155.
  51. Sociální revue, vi (1925), p. 488-490.
  52. Sociální revue, vii (1926), p. 193.

53. Sociální revue, xiii (1932), p. 542
54. Sbirka zákonů a nařízení, xii (1929), p. 195-196.
55. For a discussion of Halbwachs's theories, see Marwick, Class..., p. 48.
56. See chapter 4, p. 130; chapter 5, p. 202-203.
57. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Otázka sociální: základy Marxismu filosofické a sociologické, 5th ed., (Prague, 1946), p. 361-362.
58. See chapter 5, p. 202-203.
59. Československá vlastivěda, vol. 6 (Prague, 1930), p. 108; Štern, "Deset let...", p. 9.
60. Štern, op.cit., p. 3-5; Kořalková, Hnutí..., p. 21.
61. See, for example, Alois Tučný, Gentský system (Prague, 1925), p. 8.
62. Ibid., p. 14-15.
63. Jaromír Nečas, Nezaměstnanost a podpůrná péče v Československu (Prague, 1938), p. 45.
64. Nečas, Nezaměstnanost..., p. vi; Štern, "Deset let..." p. 18; Rudolf Tayerle, Zákony o dovolených zaměstnanců (Prague, 1925), p. 8.
65. See the discussion of the meaning of dělník worker, in Sociální Revue, vi (1925), p. 399-400.
66. Lev Winter and Jaroslav Kotěk, "Vedoucí zásady naší sociální politiky" in Idea československého státu, vol. 2, p. 416.
67. See also chapter 5, p. 189; chapter 6, p. 238-239.
68. For a discussion of the živnostanský řád see Československá vlastivěda, vol. 6 (Prague, 1930), p. 339-353.
69. Ibid., p. 350.

## Chapter 3

### Perceptions of class, estate and status in the programmes of the main Czechoslovak political parties

#### I Introduction

This chapter is based on an analysis of the political ideologies of the main Czechoslovak parties from the inter-war period. I have examined the official programmes put out by the six parties which, at one time or another, made up the various coalition governments of the Czechoslovak First Republic (the Agrarian Party, the Small Tradesmen's Party, the National Democratic Party, the Populist Party, the National Socialist Party, and the Social Democratic Party), and major theoretical works such as Frankenberger's Agrarianism, and Vašek's Introduction to Christian Sociology, where these help to develop ideas found in the party programmes<sup>1</sup>. For the Communist Party, never a party of government, but nevertheless an important force in the inter-war years, there was no explicit programme other than the tenets of Marx and Lenin, as interpreted by the Third International. I have, therefore, made reference to the proceedings of the various party congresses, which are available in published form<sup>2</sup>. I have also made use of such election manifestos as were reproduced in the two official surveys of the Czechoslovak National Assembly, The National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic in the First Decade and The National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic in the Second Decade<sup>3</sup>.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the political parties' perceptions of class, estate and status. Ideology tended to be relatively unchanging - there were only two major programme revisions in the inter-war period, undertaken by the Social Democrats in 1930, and the National Socialists in 1931. Despite their move towards fascism in the 1930s, the National Democrats never revised their original programme of 1919. Indeed, some party programmes had changed little since pre-war times<sup>4</sup>. Whatever the various parties' day-to-day response to changing political and economic circumstances, their perceptions of broad social divisions, and the social stereotypes which they used were somewhat static. The picture which emerges is couched in general terms and, like the official perceptions analysed in the previous chapter, reveals little that was specific to either Czech or Slovak societies<sup>5</sup>.

I have made brief mention of the Slovak Populist Party, but this party did not really develop a cohesive social ideology until after the independent Slovak state was founded in 1939<sup>6</sup>. Like the Communists, the party had no official published programme in the inter-war period. The source I have used, Jozef Tiso's lecture on "The Ideology of the Slovak Populist Party" to the Central Association of Czechoslovak Students in 1930, made only the most general of references to socio-economic issues. Tiso's main concern was to prove that the Slovaks were a nation in their own right, with their own distinct language<sup>7</sup>. This pre-occupation with the definition of nationality is a further reminder that there were other dimen-

sions of stratification in inter-war Czechoslovakia than the purely social<sup>8</sup>.

## II A class society?

A common characteristic of the major Czechoslovak political parties under consideration here was their preoccupation with Marxist theories of class. Of course, the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party worked out their programmes from avowedly Marxist tenets. However, all the other parties, without exception, felt compelled to take up a stance towards Marxism. The Marxist conception of class war, in particular, was seen as a very real threat to social stability, and as such to be either modified or denied in each of the non-Marxist parties' schematic accounts of how society functioned. No party really questioned the issue of whether classes could be said to exist, although some parties stated very clearly that classes ought not to exist, appealing to a higher, unifying, factor, be it religion or nation or, in the case of the Slovak Populist Party, "God and Nation", which they felt should override such narrow sectional interests<sup>9</sup>.

The clearest picture of Czechoslovak society as a class society, as might be expected, is to be found in the programmes of the two Marxist parties. The Social Democrats worked until 1930 on the theoretical basis of the old Austrian Social Democratic Party's programme, last revised in 1901. From the inception of the republic there was much discussion on the need to revise this programme,

but in the early years the party was preoccupied first with internal dissension, and then with rebuilding after the Communists had broken away in 1920-1921. It took more than a decade before the Social Democrats actually produced a programme which reflected the changed circumstance of an independent Czechoslovak Republic in which they were a party of government. Even then they did not abandon their original class theories. Thus we learn that Czechoslovak society in 1930, like Cisleithanian society in 1901 (or for that matter in 1878, when the original party programme was first drafted), was being polarised increasingly into two classes; that the economic insecurity of the working class was growing; that small-scale producers and shopkeepers were being proletarianised; and that class antagonisms and class war were as real as they had been fifty years before<sup>10</sup>. This did not reveal very much about the particular nature of Czechoslovak, as opposed to any other industrial society, when seen through Marxist eyes. Nevertheless, the party proclaimed in 1930 that the truth of its description of "present society" could be confirmed by "every honest working man", and it is true that some people found the Social Democrats' analysis of society to be in complete accord with their own experiences of the Czechoslovak social order<sup>11</sup>.

The Social Democrats' basic ideology of class did undergo some modification in 1930, and the party was particularly anxious, in its new programme, to give the widest possible definition of the term 'proletariat'. In the original nineteenth century programme, the party mentioned

"organising the proletariat" (proletariát) and "defending the standard of living of the employed classes" (pracující třídy), i.e. all those who work, a term comparable to the French travailleurs, but these expressions were never explained. The only specific social group to which the programme referred was the working class (dělnická třída). Great emphasis was laid on the party's full title, the Social Democratic Workers' Party (sociálně-demokratická strana dělnická)<sup>12</sup>. When the pre-war programme was re-issued in 1919, it was felt necessary to stress in the preamble that an appeal was being made to "both workers of the fist (dělníci rukou) and workers engaged in mental labour (dělníci práce duševní)". The programme claimed that although many of the latter had consciously served capitalism, the war had brought them to the realisation of their true class position<sup>13</sup>. Certainly the immediate post-war period saw the considerable politicisation and unionisation of white-collar employees<sup>14</sup>.

In 1930, the Social Democrats, now a respectable establishment party, wished to broaden their basis of support to "white-collar employees in both the public and the private sectors, small farmers and small businessmen"; these groups were all said to share a common interest with the working class in its struggle with the capitalists, owners of the means of production<sup>15</sup>. The terms pracující třída, or pracující lid, referring to all those who work, were used throughout the programme. However, despite the implication that the manual working class (dělnická třída) did not stand alone, it is noticeable



that the party's action programme was aimed overwhelmingly at the needs of manual workers.

A major innovation of the 1930 programme was the open espousal of the need for the Social Democratic Party to participate in government. Josef Stivín, the party's chief theorist, explained that historical developments had reached a point where the bourgeoisie was too weak to rule without the proletariat, and the proletariat was not strong enough to seize outright power. Cooperation between the two was, therefore, necessary<sup>16</sup>. There was no real attempt to analyse just how such cooperation fitted with the militant ideology of class war and class polarisation which the party still accepted in theory.

In the first years of its existence, the Communist Party was also hopeful of leading "manual workers, low-ranking non-manual employees (zřizenci), officials and small farmers" in a systematic struggle against "big business, the owners of large estates and the banks". It sought to recruit these groups into a common "proletarian front" with the working class. There was even a suggestion of the possibility of a parliamentary road to power, though not of forming a coalition with the bourgeois parties. The Communists' first congress in 1923 claimed that:

the tactics of a united front and the slogan "a workers government" are, because of the prevailing social, political and national conditions in Czechoslovakia, particularly suited to the furthering of the class struggle of the proletariat. 17

After 1923, the influence of Moscow's conception of the character and role of a bolshevik party was increasingly felt, and this affected the Communist Party's depiction of the class nature of Czechoslovak society. At the Second Party Congress in 1924, the Communists were already retreating from the idea of seeking a broad basis of support. It was stressed that the party "is and must remain a workers' party", and it was now suggested that "the proletarianised middle strata" should simply be "neutralised" in the class struggle<sup>18</sup>. Throughout the rest of the 1920s, the Communist Party cultivated the impression of an increasingly bitter class struggle - even where ideology manifestly contradicted factual evidence. Thus in 1927, when unemployment stood at about 50,000 (2.4 per cent of the workforce), and real wages reached their highest point since 1918, the Fourth Party Congress claimed that Czechoslovakia was undergoing a "chronic economic crisis", as a result of which "class conflicts between workers and small farmers on the one hand, and capitalists and agrarians on the other hand, are deepening"<sup>19</sup>. At the Fifth Party Congress in February 1929, at which the Moscow-backed left wing finally seized control, it was stated that the party, under its previous "opportunistic leadership", had lagged behind the revolutionary consciousness" of the working masses<sup>20</sup>. The state of consciousness of the working masses expressed itself in a fall of twenty per cent in the Communist vote in the elections that autumn<sup>21</sup>.

The slump of the early 1930s offered the Communists rather more convincing evidence of economic and social deterioration in the situation of the proletariat. They were able to point to the existence of three quarters of a million unemployed in January 1931, of whom only a small proportion received unemployment benefit under the Ghent system<sup>22</sup>. The party now saw its role as "leading the struggle of unemployed workers... whose pauperisation has increased their embitterment and radicalisation"<sup>23</sup>. It found in the unemployed a possible revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat<sup>24</sup>. The Communists admitted to not having the same degree of success with employed workers, acknowledging by implication that there existed a certain conflict of interests between the two groups<sup>25</sup>.

The Communist Party's insistence on class polarisation and class war grew more strident throughout the First Republic, until 1936, when the threat from Hitler was at last given priority over all considerations<sup>26</sup>. By contrast, the National Socialist Party developed away from its original basis of modified Marxism during the inter-war years. For the first thirteen years of independence it worked from a programme formulated in April 1918, six months before the Czechoslovak Republic came into being. This programme acknowledged the existence of two classes of exploiters and exploited, based on relationship to the means of production. It allowed, nonetheless, for the importance of subjective perceptions of class adherence amongst certain sections of society. It was suggested that some people who did not own capital as such nevertheless belonged to the "capitalist" class, because of their

high salaries or high social position; others, with low incomes, had social prejudices which attracted them to the capitalist class, even if in terms of earning they did not, strictly speaking, belong to it. This was said to be the case, in the Czech Lands, of salaried employees (gažisté), who, although impoverished to the level of the proletariat by wartime inflation, nevertheless often kept their old social loyalties<sup>27</sup>.

By the time the National Socialists produced their new programme in 1931 they had lost their most left-wing members, and received an influx of intellectuals from the National Party of Labour, a splinter group from the National Democrats<sup>28</sup>. Their tone in describing society was no longer quasi-Marxist; they now rejected their former division of society into two basic classes. Their new theory claimed that social progress had led to the creation of a whole series of new classes, in some ways closely bound together and dependent on each other, though they were at times in conflict. The National Socialists did not explain the specific nature of these new classes, although they did deny the universal validity of economic determinism. Social friction was seen as a matter as much of morality as of economic conflict of interest. The mere possession of wealth did not of itself lead to class conflict - this depended on the spirit in which capital was deployed. The Marxist idea of class war was condemned as unscientific, as was the possibility of a totally classless society<sup>29</sup>. The 1931 programme claimed that its socialism was empirical, and there was some suggestion that changes in society had been brought about by the

First World War and the fact of independence<sup>30</sup>. However, the influence of Masaryk's The Social Question, which described society at the end of the nineteenth century, is apparent, and it would be a mistake to interpret the National Socialists' evolving theories of class as necessarily reflecting social developments since 1918<sup>31</sup>.

The ideological statements of the non-Marxist, or so-called "bourgeois" parties often reveal a paradoxical fascination with Marxist class theory, if only in their desire to refute it. The Agrarian Party's election manifesto of April 1920 spoke of the "senseless division of the nation" into two classes, capitalists and proletariat; they as a party refused to accept this, since it overlooked the rural population, the majority of the nation. They described the latter as "neither capitalist, nor bourgeois, nor proletarian, but rather a separate and distinct group, characterised by its relationship to the land"<sup>32</sup>. The idea that Marxist ideology could reasonably be applied to urban, but not rural, society occurs again in the Agrarian Party's programme of 1922. The programme suggested that industry "disturbs the social balance of the population", leading to the "demise of independent entrepreneurs" and the "concentration of concerns". This was contrasted to the situation in agriculture, where it was claimed that land reform had actually led to an increase in the numbers of "small and medium-sized entrepreneurs"<sup>33</sup>. The party claimed, moreover, that the private ownership of land, unlike that of industry, did not lead to the exploitation of man by man, but merely to the

"intensive cultivation of the land"<sup>34</sup>.

The Tradesmen's Party, like the Agrarians, acknowledged that Marxist class doctrine had some basis in fact. It saw small businessmen and shopkeepers as the buffer between big business and the proletariat. The party's daily newspaper, Reforma, explained in 1922 that if there were no "middle estate" (středni stav), "the interests of capital and the proletariat would be ranged against each other in implacable battle ranks. The gulf between the two would be insurmountable." If society would only agree to support the middle estate, Marx's projected polarisation of classes and the resulting confrontation could yet be avoided<sup>35</sup>.

The two Catholic Parties and the National Democratic Party were eager to substitute a higher ideal for the existing social divisions. The Czech Populists, in the party programme drawn up in 1920, declared themselves in favour of "class love, not class war". They appealed for a spirit of Christian solidarity, which would override sectional interests<sup>36</sup>. A similar idea was taken up by Tiso, one of the foremost figures in the Slovak Populist Party, and in a discussion of party ideology from 1930 he spoke of the need to "preserve the interests of the whole unit, and not the interests of individual classes", and claimed that the state's highest task was "the equalisation of the interests of individual classes"<sup>37</sup>. The National Democrats stressed their own role as a national party, which rose above one-sided class interests in favour of

"a higher interest, the interest of the whole". They claimed that their party united "the educated man, the member of the liberal professions, the worker and the factory-owner, the tradesman and the shopkeeper, the farmer and the small-holder. The more varied the interests, the more easily they can be mutually reconciled and subsumed within the ideal of the common good of the nation and the state"<sup>38</sup>.

It is obvious from this that even a party which wished to minimise the existence of class divisions had to acknowledge that Czechoslovak society was, in reality, divided. Indeed, the socio-economic programme of the National Democrats recognised the following basic social groups: agriculturalists; tradesmen; workers; and lower-ranking white-collar employees (zřizenci), officials, teachers and the intelligentsia<sup>39</sup>. The Populist Party, basing its programme on Christian sociology and the papal encyclical, Rerum Novarum, made the idea of a corporate state one of the main features of its political ideology. It too recognised four "estates", based on the division of labour, which were virtually the same as the groups identified by the National Democrats<sup>40</sup>. Reference to these four professional groupings can also be found in other party programmes, though in a less systematic way. Indeed, to certain of the political parties, three of these four groups represented a kind of redeeming force for the whole of society. The Agrarian Party, or to give it its full title, the Republican Party of Agricultural and Small-farming People, saw the agricultural population fulfilling

such a role in Czechoslovakia. The "Tradesmen's and Shopkeepers' Party of the Middle Estate" and the "Social Democratic Workers' Party" each stressed the crucial importance of the social groups out of which they had arisen. The Communists' idealisation of the "revolutionary" working class - albeit ever more narrowly defined - was a similar case.

The pictures of these specific professional groups in the party programmes under consideration here give a far more actual impression of divisions within Czechoslovak society than the parties' broader philosophical remarks on class per se. The evidence from the various party programmes about each of these groups will, therefore, now be examined separately.

### III The Agricultural Community

In so far as the various parties did put forward policies relating to the agricultural population, they were agreed in treating those people who worked on the land as a separate community<sup>41</sup>. Both the Populists and the National Democrats, for example, recognised the existence of an agricultural "estate", by implication including all farm owners. The former classed agricultural workers as a separate branch of labour, and the latter made their only reference to this group of workers in the section of their programme devoted to agriculture<sup>42</sup>. Although the official ideologies of the three socialist parties stressed the common interests of the lower strata of both rural and



urban society, their pronouncements, however unwittingly, do suggest that the agricultural population had to be treated as a distinct entity. The Communist Party, for instance, was perennially preoccupied with "The Agrarian Question", or "The Party's Tasks in the Countryside"<sup>43</sup>.

The Agrarians, self-styled representatives of "agricultural and small-farming people", made the slogan "the village is one family" a salient feature of their political ideology<sup>44</sup>. They attempted to appeal to the whole rural community, claiming at their twenty-fifth jubilee congress in 1925 to have transformed what had initially been a peasant farmers' party into a movement which embraced "all those people who worked on the soil, without exception, whether farmer or dwarf-holder, estate owner or small-holder, agricultural labourer or rural tradesman, or the agrarian intelligentsia"<sup>45</sup>. According to Agrarian theory, a mystical "law of the land" united "all who live on the land... by a bond far stronger than divisions of property, religion or profession"<sup>46</sup>. Even more crucial to the party's ideology was the suggestion that there were no serious social or economic divisions amongst the farming population as such. Agrarian democracy was said to acknowledge:

no differences according to cut of coat or size of landholding; it recognises only equal members of a party who must live together, work together, and are united by the same estate interests, but also by cultural and social interests and the ancient tradition of the Czech countryside. 47

The party was always careful to stress that the agricultural labourer and the čeled were "equal constituents of

our rural group"<sup>48</sup>.

Such claims bear the mark of rhetoric. Even in Agrarian literature there were occasional intimations that the farming population was, in practice, rather less than united. Otakar Frankenberger, the main exponent of Agrarian ideology in inter-war Czechoslovakia, admitted, for example, that there were sometimes clashes of interest between the individual branches of agriculture. He claimed that such conflicts were, however, more apparent than real, putting forward the ingenuous explanation that agricultural prices were actually inter-dependent since, if the price of corn went up, the arable farmer would be in a position to pay a higher price for cattle<sup>49</sup>. Fundamental divisions of a different kind were suggested in a report on the activities of the Agrarian Union of Czechoslovak Estate Owners and Tenants (Svaz československých statkářů a nájemců) to the party congress held in 1928. Great emphasis was laid on the role of the owner of the medium-sized estate (střední statkář) as a mediator, who was to:

co-exist in a friendly way with his fellow citizens, especially with small farmers, to lead them on the road to progress, and to be an advisor to them, so that life in the countryside will be peaceful and more joyous. A very important future role will be to gain the cooperation of the agricultural labourer... and to try to disengage the latter from organisations which are hostile to agriculture. 50

As will be seen in later chapters, farmers were very concerned about the influence of socialist doctrine on their hired labourers<sup>51</sup>. However, there is also a suggestion here that the relationship between estate owners and

and small farmers did not always fit the desired Agrarian model of neighbourly cooperation.

No other party's ideology attempted to suggest such a fundamental degree of unity amongst the farming population as Agrarianism. Indeed, the socialist parties sought rather to stress socio-economic divisions within rural society and to highlight, in particular, the disadvantages experienced by small farmers and agricultural labourers. The Communists, for example, produced detailed analyses of rural stratification at both their Fourth Congress, in 1927, and their Sixth Congress, in 1931. The party poured scorn on the Agrarians' claim that "everyone from the agricultural labourer and the dwarf-holder to Mr. Schwarzenberg, and Sonntág, President of the Anglobanka [could be described as] one family"<sup>52</sup>. The Communists themselves preferred rather to divide the agricultural population between the "exploited" and the "oppressed" - agricultural labourers, dwarf-holders, who relied in part on their earnings as labourers in either agriculture or industry, small subsistence farmers, and middling farmers who worked on the land - and the "exploiters of labour" - rich peasants and estate owners<sup>53</sup>. Especial mention was made of the latter's wives who, it was claimed, did not work, and looked "as if they were made of butter", in contrast to small farmers' wives, who were worn out by work and worries, and led "thankless" lives<sup>54</sup>.

The National Socialists and the Social Democrats both emphasised, in their party programmes, the lack of social

and economic rights amongst small farmers and agricultural labourers. The Social Democrats' action programme of 1930 was particularly concerned to demand that the working conditions of farm labourers should be put on the same level as those of workers in industry, that full welfare protection should be extended to them, and that the čelední řád should be abolished. Agricultural workers, as has been explained in the previous chapter, were still a very underprivileged group in the social and employment legislation of the inter-war years<sup>55</sup>. Both the Social Democrats and the National Socialists also looked to the needs of the small farmer; they stressed that a new land reform was required to help small owners. The National Socialists went so far as to suggest that the land redistribution, which had followed the original land reform of 1919, had mainly served the interests of a "restricted caste of richer farmers" and had, in effect, created a new zemanstvo, a new landed gentry<sup>56</sup>. The two parties also sought to encourage independent cooperatives for small farmers, presumably in order to win the latter from the existing, Agrarian-dominated, cooperative system<sup>57</sup>.

In an action programme for agriculture from 1935, the National Socialist Party stressed its own support for the "small and medium agriculturalist", and contrasted this with Agrarian policies which "defend the interests of strong individuals: large estate owners, residual estate owners, large peasant farmers, agricultural industry and, in particular, agricultural cooperatives"<sup>58</sup>. Notwith-

standing such suggestions of an internally divided farming community, the party's 1931 programme had admitted that the small farmer and the agricultural worker often supported the Agrarians for "reasons of estate consciousness", even though that movement did not meet their social needs<sup>59</sup>.

The Agrarian Party certainly had a very powerful political weapon in its idealisation of the peasant, and its appeal to peasant consciousness, which fed on prejudices shared by many sectors of the agricultural community, irrespective of any social or economic hierarchy<sup>60</sup>. The peasant was praised as the upholder of national culture. In the 1920 elections, country people were urged to go to the polls "filled with the pride and glory that you are of the same blood as those to whom most credit for our independence is due. Country people upheld the Czechoslovak language. and nationality even during times when all others were estranged... There would be no republic if you had not guarded and defended... the sacred Czechoslovak soil"<sup>61</sup>. Moreover, the Agrarian Party's programme of 1922 encouraged the agricultural community, "living... in constant contact with the laws of nature", to think of themselves as "the most creative element in the state... a source of regeneration for the nation, a virgin spring of physical and moral strength"<sup>62</sup>.

Underlying these attitudes was a certain tension between town and country. The Agrarians felt that the peasantry were not receiving an economic reward commensurate with

their contribution to the national well-being. Frankenberg, in his treatise on Agrarianism, stressed the need to ensure that the farming population got a just return for its work, and demanded that the national income should be more fairly divided. He admitted to "considerable conflicts of interest" between the towns and the countryside<sup>63</sup>. Resentment of the towns was expressed in the party's programme of 1922, when the "decay and degeneration" of urban society was compared to the land "which sustains and upholds all that is good and healthy"<sup>64</sup>. An awareness that town-country relationships were less than ideal was also expressed in the National Socialists' programme of 1931. The party was concerned to improve the economic well-being of the "small country person" in order to stem the flight from the land, and encourage harmony between the urban and the rural populations, which it saw as basic to a healthy social structure<sup>65</sup>.

Overall, the political parties saw the agricultural population of Czechoslovakia as occupying an ambivalent position. In some ways it was internally divided, and yet it had a clear sense of separate identity, which was often expressed in terms of hostility to industry and the towns.

#### IV Small businessmen

The second social group distinguished in the party programmes comprised the various categories of small businessmen, for whom the Tradesmen's and Shopkeepers' Party was the self-styled representative. None of the parties found it necessary to define this group, perhaps because

the Živnostenský řád, the trade code, described the various kinds of trade concern in some detail<sup>66</sup>. The Tradesmen's Party itself certainly never delimited its electoral constituency precisely. This is an important point, for although the Agrarians claimed that the village was "one family", it was crucial to the Tradesmen's Party's ideology that the interests of large and small business were diametrically opposed. The party described the boundary between the virtuous small businessman and the rapacious capitalist in the most general of terms, explaining that it acknowledged "capital accumulated by honest work and thrift, as long as it operates in a moral and social manner"<sup>67</sup>. Its use of the phrase "middle estate" in its full official title suggested that its programme was intended to appeal primarily to the respectable small businessman; this, however, was never stated explicitly.

The Tradesmen's Party did not paint such a detailed picture of its members' virtues as the Agrarians. The common need for better credit facilities, or lower taxation, was much less evocative of close social, as opposed to economic, bonds than the Agrarians' "law of the land". Nonetheless, the Tradesmen's Party was in no doubt about the significance of small businesses for society. It identified their owners with a larger "middle estate", comprising farmers and salaried employees, as well as tradesmen and shopkeepers, which was said to form the "basis of economic independence for both the individual and the nation. It fulfills a fundamental human need for independence and self-expression and, unlike big business, does

not present a social threat to the community"<sup>68</sup>. The party claimed that the very existence of small businesses defused social conflict, by providing the proletariat with a model to which they could aspire, and the hope of being independent themselves one day<sup>69</sup>.

Sentiments such as these were expressed in the programmes of all the non-socialist parties. They recognised small businessmen as a separate social group, albeit linked to the wider concept of a middle estate, which deserved help to face competition from big business and avoid proletarianisation. The National Democrats proclaimed small and medium entrepreneurs to be the bastion of a "social order based on personal responsibility and the freedom of the individual"<sup>70</sup>. Populist ideology expressed sentimental attachment to the ideal of the small businessman who was "neither too rich, nor too poor", and whose independence saved him from the "psychosis of the mob"<sup>71</sup>. However, unlike the tradesmen's own party, which was unequivocal in its praise, both the Populists and the National Democrats recognised a certain conservatism and economic backwardness in the small business sector<sup>72</sup>.

It was this aspect of small businesses which the National Socialist Party stressed. In its 1931 programme it was openly sceptical of the virtues of shoring up obsolescent trades in the face of technical progress<sup>73</sup>. For the Marxist parties, too, the concentration of capital and the decline of the small business was part of the natural progression of history. Like the National Socialists, both



the Social Democrats and the Communists hoped to enlist small businessmen as allies of, rather than as models for, the working class in the struggle for a more just society<sup>74</sup>.

The action programmes of the various parties reveal something of the economic standing of shopkeepers and tradesmen. There was, for example, a general demand to extend pension legislation to the self-employed, which underlined the vulnerability of the small businessman, who was not covered by such welfare benefits<sup>75</sup>. The non-socialist parties were very concerned, in theory at least, to bolster up the somewhat precarious financial position of many small businesses. The Agrarians and the National Democrats advocated as practical solutions to this problem only the encouragement of cooperatives, and improvements in technical education for tradesmen<sup>76</sup>. The Populists and the Tradesmen's Party itself, however, wanted to mount a full-scale attack on capitalism. They suggested policies ranging from a ban on bank involvement in trade and industry to the abolition of repair shops and retail outlets owned by manufacturers<sup>77</sup>. There is a strong sense of nostalgia here for pre-industrial society, and the protection once afforded to small producers by the guild system.

Although the non-socialist parties sought to emphasise the crucial role of the small businessman in society, the Tradesmen's Party was nonetheless very defensive about the actual social standing of its constituents. It found

it necessary to call for schoolchildren to be "inculcated with a desire for economic independence and a love of craft work", which suggests that, in real life, the status of trade was not particularly high<sup>78</sup>. In fact, the overall impression of small businessmen given by the Tradesmen's Party was of a group beleaguered on all sides by economic insecurity and lack of social esteem.

## V Salaried employees

The third social group, comprising officials, teachers and lower-ranking white-collar workers was perhaps the most amorphous of all the divisions of Czechoslovak society described in the party programmes. The disparate nature of this group is illustrated by the fact that, in a country where peasants, tradesmen and workers each had their own political representatives, it had no specific party of its own. Only the sketchiest of information can actually be pieced together from the various party programmes under consideration here, most of which made no more than passing reference to these categories of salaried employees.

Only the National Democrats and the Populists devoted separate sections of their programmes to what they both saw as one of the four "estates" in Czechoslovak society. The definition given in each programme was almost identical:

Officials, teachers and lower-ranking white-collar workers in both the public and the private sphere live from wage labour like

workers. They can be distinguished from workers by their training, the character of their work, their greater job security and their higher pay. 79

In other words, great emphasis was placed on the distinction between manual work and non-manual work, which in turn was said to decide the socio-economic position of the individual. In stressing that zřizenci (lower-ranking white-collar workers), too, were to be considered as non-manual employees and, therefore, as a distinct social category from workers, the two parties followed a precedent set in employment legislation since 1910<sup>80</sup>.

No other party grouped together these three categories of employees in such a way as to highlight the non-manual nature of their work as the main bond between them. The socialist parties were, indeed, far more concerned to emphasise their dependent position as wage labour, and to appeal to supposed common interests with the rest of the proletariat in their struggle against capital<sup>81</sup>. The National Socialists in their programme of April 1918, and the Social Democrats in a 1919 reprint of their pre-war programme, both pointed to the hardship suffered by salaried employees during the First World War, and suggested that they had been radicalised and proletarianised by their experiences<sup>82</sup>.

The programmes of the National Democrats and the Populists also acknowledged that salaried employees had been badly hit financially by the war<sup>83</sup>. Both parties proposed salary increases of a kind which would re-emphasise the dist-

inction between mental and manual work, claiming "the reward for mental work should reflect a just evaluation of the meaning of such work for society, especially in comparison to manual work"<sup>84</sup>. The Populists added, significantly, that even the "lowest-placed officials" should receive a decent living wage<sup>85</sup>. Complaints about financial hardship from this social group were common, especially in the early years of the republic (the two party programmes date from 1919 and 1920 respectively), before the major salary reform for state employees in 1926<sup>86</sup>.

Beyond discussion of such specific practical issues as salary levels, it is difficult to separate the parties' perceptions of salaried employees from their views on the nature of the intelligentsia. The National Democrats even grouped together "lower-ranking white-collar workers, officials, teachers and the intelligentsia" in their programme. They did not explain whether the intelligentsia, whom they claimed as the "brain of society", was to be understood as a completely separate group from the first three, or was in some way coincident with them<sup>87</sup>.

It is difficult to imagine that zřízenci, most of whom had little more than basic education, could be subsumed under the heading "intelligentsia". However, this term was often applied somewhat indiscriminately to all people with high-school diplomas. The practice was condemned by both the Agrarian Party and the Tradesmen's Party. The Agrarian programme of 1922 stated that the party refused to acknowledge the claim to "social privilege and ascend-

ancy" by any exclusive group, or the notion of a "distinct class of intelligentsia"; it registered a moral protest:

We, in contrast with others, understand by this word [intelligentsia] not a formal certificate of education, but a combination of learning, spirit and diligence... [which] is not the exclusive province of any one estate or class. 88

The Tradesmen, too, were opposed to the "exaggerated elevation of mental workers to the status of an intelligentsia" and claimed that the formal absolution of school education "does not always enoble the spirit"<sup>89</sup>. It was, of course, unusual for either small farmers or small businessmen to complete the maturita (school-leaving certificate), which was the basic qualification for both grammar-school teachers and many officials. Hence these two parties' concern that trade and agriculture were being underestimated socially in comparison to those professions which did require a certain educational standard.

## VI Manual workers

As with their treatment of other occupational categories, such as "officials", or "tradesmen", the parties made little attempt to define precisely the social group which they identified variously as workers, dělníci, or the workforce, dělnictvo, or, in the case of the Social Democrats and occasionally the Communist Party, as the working class, dělnická třída. A partial exception was the National Democratic Party, which described "the workforce" in its programme of 1919 as "that class of people who, not controlling the means of production, have to earn their liv-

ing by working for wages" - a very imprecise definition, which might equally have been applied to white-collar employees, although from the context it is clear that the reference was to manual workers alone<sup>90</sup>. The other parties evidently regarded any specific explanation of what they meant by "worker" as superfluous.

It is clear from the party programmes that they did not regard labour as monolithic. There is some suggestion of a divide between agricultural labourers and the industrial proletariat, based as much on attitudes as material interests<sup>91</sup>. The Populists even suggested a third division, distinguishing between workers employed in industry and those working for small businesses and trade concerns, but they did not elaborate<sup>92</sup>. However, the parties' policies for labour were often expressed in the most general terms, making it difficult to tell whether they were speaking of all manual workers, or simply those engaged in non-agricultural occupations. The only suggestion of horizontal divisions within labour came from the various protocols of Communist Party congresses. The Communists distinguished an "aristocracy" of well-paid workers, "a foreign body in the working class", identified as Social Democratic supporters, who were said to be encouraged by the bourgeoisie to undermine solidarity<sup>93</sup>. The party also sought to identify that section of the working class which was militantly class-conscious. It spoke first of recruiting young unskilled workers in large concerns, especially those who had been recently enlisted in the production process, and later identified with the unemployed,

who were claimed to have been radicalised by pauperisation<sup>94</sup>.

Rather than offering a clear definition of labour, the parties tended to concentrate their attention on socio-economic problems of particular concern to manual workers. Both straightforward descriptions of existing conditions, and prescriptions for their improvement, can be pieced together to form a picture of working-class life.

The Populists were particularly concerned to encourage family life. Their programme drew attention to the need to ensure that poor children got a balanced diet, if necessary by the distribution of free food. They suggested the need to ensure that "country girls and working-class girls" should receive adequate training in home economics and cookery, indicating a rather patronising attitude which was not unique in Czechoslovakia<sup>95</sup>. Medical care should be improved, especially for mothers and babies<sup>96</sup>. (The infant mortality rate in Czechoslovakia was amongst the highest in Europe<sup>97</sup>). The Populists declared their encouragement of "the desire for one's own hearth". They wished for more government support for workers' housing cooperatives, and drew attention to the unsatisfactory condition of much existing housing; they stated that sub-standard housing should be condemned, that there should be a ban on cellar and basement dwellings, and that adequate drainage, healthy water supplies and proper refuse disposal should be provided<sup>98</sup>.

The Social Democrats wished to remove those discriminatory features of social and employment legislation which helped to create different working conditions for agricultural and industrial labour, and also perpetuate distinctions between mental and manual work. Thus they sought the abolition of the čelední řád, the extension of accident insurance to agricultural work, and of holidays with pay to seasonal workers<sup>99</sup>. They also wished employment legislation for manual workers to be codified, and specified that there should be compensation for wrongful dismissal. They desired improvements to the social benefits received by manual workers and their families, for instance by making widows' pensions mandatory and easing conditions under which invalidity pensions were granted. Their particular concern was that manual workers who were unable to work should no longer suffer material deprivation, or be offered simply a "superior form of poor relief"<sup>100</sup>.

The parties agreed that the working class, more than any other section of society, was subject to fluctuations in the economy which could lead to sudden unemployment. The Populists observed that the workers' "dependence on the labour market is greater than that of officials", and the National Democrats spoke of the "varying need for workers" which could lead to "unemployment through no fault of their own"<sup>101</sup>. Otherwise the party programmes referred to this problem only in terms of palliatives. It is noticeable that neither the Social Democrats nor the National Socialists, whose programmes were revised at the height of the depression, placed particular emphasis



on the plight of the unemployed. The Communists, in contrast, were eager to organise the unemployed whom, as already stated, they viewed as a potentially revolutionary force in Czechoslovak society.

The overall impression given of working-class life was of considerable insecurity and material hardship. As the Populists acknowledged at their congress of 1927, "workers live in conditions of particularly great poverty"<sup>102</sup>. There was some suggestion of improvement since independence; the National Socialists spoke, in 1931, of the positive effects of those social benefits already introduced for manual workers, and noted a growing and beneficial tendency for wages and conditions of work to be negotiated by trades unions, rather than the individual worker<sup>103</sup>. However, most parties saw far-reaching measures as necessary to bring about substantive change in the manual worker's lot. They were less willing to take concrete action to realise these intentions<sup>104</sup>.

## VII An upper stratum?

It is a noticeable feature of the various party programmes that they were concerned almost exclusively with the interests of what the National Socialists called "small and middling people"<sup>105</sup>. Much attention was concentrated on the position of the small businessman, or the badly-paid minor official, or the peasant farmer. Their prosperous counterparts, the director of a large company, the private secretary to a Minister, or the owner of a large estate, were virtually ignored. The most prestigious

group of self-employed, the liberal or "free" professions, were not mentioned by any party.

This is not to say that the parties totally overlooked the existence of a social stratum higher than the "middle estate". They were almost united in their treatment of capital as an abstract and threatening force. The Communists, of course, sought to unite "working people" in the broadest sense in the struggle against "big business" (velkokapitál)<sup>106</sup>. The latter was painted in the blackest of colours, as being responsible for unemployment, emigration, falling wages, high taxation and generally "building itself up at the expense of the working strata"<sup>107</sup>. The Tradesmen's Party, too, described big business in lurid terms: "We condemn the ravishing lusts of big capital, which builds its greatness and wealth on the graves of thousands of annihilated small livelihoods"<sup>108</sup>. Even the National Democrats, the party of urban business interests, which was closely associated with the Živnostenská banka, found it necessary to mount ritual attacks on capital, speaking of the need to "defend small-scale production against the voracity of big business"<sup>109</sup>. Such attitudes suggested a society which had not yet come to terms with the reality of extensive industrialisation.

The one party to suggest openly that the development of large-scale enterprises might be beneficial for society was the National Socialist Party, in its programme of 1931. It saw the growth of the share company as one of the signs of "automatic socialisation", claiming that the

ownership of financial capital was passing to the "widest strata". The party was particularly enthusiastic about the increasing prevalence of managerial control:

The employee makes decisions about a concern now, not the owner. People do not achieve managerial positions because they were born of rich fathers, or because they are heirs to a large fortune, but rather because they are the most competent people. 110

The implication was that all managers had achieved their position by merit alone, rather than acknowledging that many were still helped in their careers by family connections<sup>111</sup>.

Just as most of the parties failed to develop the idea of a wealthy business stratum, so little mention was made of a stratum of landed wealth. The Agrarians stressed that the Czechoslovaks, unlike neighbouring nations, had no aristocracy and formed "a nation of exclusively democratic social and economic character"<sup>112</sup>. Both they and the National Democrats spoke of the land reform in terms of the repossession of land from a foreign aristocracy by small and middling Czechoslovak farmers<sup>113</sup>. On the other hand, both the Communists and the National Socialists pointed out that in the process of this redistribution of land a new landed gentry (zemanstvo) had come into being<sup>114</sup>. However, only the former elaborated on this point; it was stated that "estate owners and large estate owners are linked with industrial and financial capital, sitting on the boards of sugar refineries, distilleries and starch works and other industrial concerns". Particular mention was made of František Udržal, then Agrarian

Prime Minister, who, as well as being a landowner, was alleged to have close links with the Škoda works<sup>115</sup>.

None of the parties made specific reference to the more prestigious intellectual professions. Thus the overall evidence in party ideology of the existence of an upper stratum or <sup>upper</sup>strata is minimal, especially in the programmes of the non-socialist parties. Of course, in the age of mass politics, it was necessary to concentrate on the needs of the ordinary voter, but the desire to picture Czechoslovak society as the society of the "little man" is, nonetheless, striking.

#### VIII Conclusion

The party programmes and pronouncements examined in this chapter make it clear that the Czechoslovak parties were preoccupied with the extent and nature of social divisions<sup>116</sup>. Their descriptions of society were often vague, uncertain in definition and terminology, and extremely simplistic. They were frequently evasive, or apparently naive; sections of society were barely mentioned, others were referred to in almost lyrical terms. The Agrarians and the Tradesmen were little concerned with any social group other than their own constituents. The two Marxist parties, of course, had a coherent ideology upon which to base their pronouncements; their conclusions about the underlying nature of social divisions were different from those of the "bourgeois" parties, or of the National Socialists in their revised programme of 1931. Neverthe-

less, allowing for ideological pronouncements, the parties did offer broadly similar opinions about the significant divisions in Czechoslovak society.

When dealing with fundamental professional groups, such as "peasants", or "tradesmen", or "officials", or "workers" the parties seemed confident enough, and offered little explicit definition of terminology. They were rather less sure of the concept of a middle estate. The fact that it was usually found necessary to spell out the social composition of this group suggests that the term was prescriptive, rather than descriptive. Despite the desire of the non-socialist parties to suggest a certain social unity between peasants, small businessmen and salaried employees, it is noticeable that they dealt with each category separately in their programmes.

The overall picture of society produced from analysis of party ideology lacks a clear vision of an upper stratum, apart from the almost ritualised attacks on capital. The two traditional occupational groups, the peasantry and small tradesmen, were obviously regarded with much sentimental attachment, although in practice they seem to have been awarded a fairly low social status. The importance of the division between manual and non-manual labour is clear; in the party programmes, as in social legislation, zřizenci were usually distinguished from dělníci, even sometimes by the socialist parties, who regarded both as part of the proletariat<sup>117</sup>. Finally there is a suggestion of a fundamental division between rural and urban society.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. The various histories and accounts of the Czechoslovak party system do not make it clear how many programmes each party produced during the inter-war years. Both the National Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party inherited programmes from pre-war times, and each produced a major revision, in 1931 and 1930 respectively. The National Democratic Party produced its first programme in 1919, and this was never revised. The Agrarian Party also produced a programme in 1919, but unfortunately I have been unable to locate a copy of this. According to Hans Lemberg, this programme was considerably expanded in 1922, the version which is analysed here, and was then retained with only minor alterations until the end of the First Republic: see Hans Lemberg, "Die agrarische Parteien in den Böhmisches Ländern und in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik" in Heinz Gollwitzer, ed., Europäische Bauernparteien im 20. Jahrhundert (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 348. For the Tradesmen's Party, I have used a programme published in 1929. There was at least one more programme, dating from 1932, but I have been unable to locate a copy; see Vladimír Krechler, Politické strany v předmnichovském Československu (Prague, 1967), p. 48. For the Populist Party, I have used the programme for the Bohemian branch, published in 1920; I have no evidence of any other programme from the inter-war period. I have also used Otakar Frankenberger, Agrarismus, národní hospodářství se stanoviska venkovského lidu (Prague, 1923), and Bedřich Vašek, Rukojet křesťanské sociologie (Olomouc, 1935).
2. I was unable to locate published versions of the proceedings of the inter-war congresses of the other political parties, with the exception of an account of the ninth congress of the Populist Party in Bohemia: Bohumil Stašek, ed., Československá strana lidová ve své práci a ukolech (Prague, 1937).
3. Národní shromáždění republiky Československé v prvním desetiletí (Prague, 1928); Národní shromáždění republiky Československé v druhém desetiletí (Prague, 1938).
4. The Social Democrats used their 1878 programme, with minor revisions, until 1930. The Populist programme was based on papal encyclicals from the late nineteenth century, notably Rerum novarum of 1891. Agrarian ideology was first expounded in a party programme of 1903, which continued to influence party ideology after 1918; see Deset let práce republikánské strany zemědělského a maloroľnického lidu v republice československé (Prague, 1928-1929), p. 9-10.
5. In fact, most of the programmes were originally produced in the Czech Lands before the First World War, and there were very few references to Slovakia in

the post-war programme revisions.

6. The main exponent being Štefan Polakovič, especially his Slovenský národný socializmus (Bratislava, 1941).
7. Jozef Tiso, Ideologia Slovenskej Ľudovej Strany (Prague, 1930), *passim*.
8. See also chapter 1 above, p. 37-38.
9. "For God and Nation" was the Slovak Populist Party's rallying call, see Jozef Tiso, Ideologia..., p. 6.
10. Program československé sociálně-demokratické strany dělnické (Brno, 1919), p. 4-5. (Hereafter known as Soc.Dem. 1919.) Program československé sociálně-demokratické strany dělnické schválený XVI sjezdem strany ve dnech 27-29 září 1930 (Prague, 1930), p. 7-8. (Hereafter known as Soc.Dem. 1930.)
11. Soc.Dem. 1930, p. 4. See also chapter 5 below, p. 205-206.
12. Soc.Dem. 1919, p. 5.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
14. See chapter 6, p. 261- 262.
15. Soc.Dem. 1930, p.7.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
17. Protokol prvního řádného sjezdu komunistické strany československé (Prague, n.d.), p. 13. (Hereafter known as Protokol první.)
18. Protokol druhého řádného sjezdu komunistické strany (Prague, 1925), p. 112. (Hereafter known as Protokol druhý.)
19. Protokol čtvrtého řádného sjezdu komunistické strany Československa: Sekce III internacionály (Prague, 1927), p. 98, 100. (Hereafter known as Protokol čtvrtý.) See also Jacques Rupník, Histoire du parti communiste tchécoslovaque des origines à la prise de pouvoir (Paris, 1981), p. 92.
20. Zdeněk Suda, Zealots and Rebels, a History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Stanford, 1980), p. 115.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
22. Protokol šestého řádného sjezdu KSČ (Prague, 1931), p. 24. (Hereafter known as Protokol šestý.)
23. *Ibid.*, p. 31-32.
24. See also chapter 4, p. 154-155.

25. Protokol šestý, p. 32.
26. Protokol sedmého sjezdu komunistické strany Československa (Praha, n.d.), passim. (Hereafter known as Protokol sedmý.)
27. Program československé strany národně-socialistické přijatý na VII valném sjezdu dne 30. 31 března a 1 dubna 1918, 2nd ed., (Prague, 1928), p. 7-8. (Hereafter known as Nat.Soc. 1918.)
28. For a background study of the National Socialist party see: Josef Harna, Kritika ideologie a programu českého národního socialismu (Prague, 1978), especially p. 77-85.
29. Program a zásady československé strany národně-socialistické (Prague, 1933), p. 57, 160. (Hereafter known as Nat.Soc. 1931.)
30. Ibid., p. 65, 55, 59.
31. Masaryk, Otázka sociální...
32. Národní shromáždění... v prvním desetiletí, p. 155
33. Program a organizační řád "republikánské strany zemědělského a malorolnického lidu" (Prague, 1922), p. 11-12. (Hereafter known as Agr. 1922.)
34. Ibid., p. 22.
35. Reforma, 26 April 1922, quoted in Zdeněk Deyl, "K ekonomickým a politickým problémům městské maloburžoazie v českých zemích za předmnichovské ČSR" in Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, iv (1964), p. 719.
36. Obnova lidské společnosti; program a zásady Československé strany lidové v Čechách (Prague, 1920), p. 32. (Hereafter known as Pop. 1920.)
37. Tiso, op.cit., p. 11.
38. Program československé národní demokracie schválený valným sjezdem strany dne 25 března 1919 (Prague, 1919), p. 3. (Hereafter known as Nat.Dem. 1919.)
39. Ibid, p. 39-46.
40. Pop. 1920, p. 30-53. The party made no mention of an intelligentsia.
41. The Tradesmen's Party cooperated very closely with the Agrarians on all matters which did not directly involve its own constituents, and never found it necessary to put forward comprehensive policies for agriculture or the farming community. Tiso's exposé of the ideology of the Slovak Populist Party made no reference to any specific social group.



42. Pop. 1920, p. 39-43; Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 39-41.
43. Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 14; Soc.Dem. 1930, p. 7; Protokol čtvrtý, p. 35; Protokol šestý, p. 107.
44. See Jaroslav César and Bohumil César, "O ideologii československého agrarismu" in ČSCH, vii (1959), p. 272-273, 279; Frankenger, Agrarismus..., p. 17-18.
45. Cited in Dušan Uhlíř, "Dva směry československém agrárním hnutí a rozchod Karla Práška s republikánskou stranou" in Sborník historický, xviii (1971), p. 135-136.
46. Agr. 1922, p. 9.
47. Uhlíř, "Dva směry...", p. 136, this is a quotation from a protocol issued after the jubilee congress of the party in 1925.
48. Národní shromáždění...v prvním desetiletí, p. 157.
49. Frankenger, Agrarismus..., p. 14-15.
50. Deset let práce republikánské strany zemědělského a maloroľnického ľidu v republice československého (Prague, 1928-1929), p. 163.
51. See chapter 4, p. 147; chapter 5, p. 191.
52. Protokol šestý, p. 117. Mr is used deliberately; despite the fact that titles had been legally abolished, Prince Schwarzenberg would normally be referred to as such. Kuneš Sonntag was a leading Agrarian politician who occupied various ministries in 1919-1920, and later joined the Angločeská banka.
53. Protokol čtvrtý, p. 35-36; Protokol šestý, p. 107-112.
54. Protokol čtvrtý, p. 41-42.
55. Soc.Dem. 1930, p. 12, 28. The čelední řády, the legal codes which governed the employment conditions of agricultural labourers, contained such anachronistic provisions as a ban on luxurious clothing, or the right of an employer to punish his čeled as if the latter were a family member; see Slovník veřejného práva československého, vol. 1 (Brno, 1929), p. 176-182. See also chapter 2 above, p. 77-79.
56. Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 87-89.
57. Ibid., p. 91; Soc.Dem. 1930, p. 12.
58. František Jindra, Československá strana národně-socialistická a zemědělci (Prague, 1935), p. 3.

59. Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 164.
60. See chapter 5, p. 188-189.
61. Národní shromáždění... v prvním desetiletí, p. 157.
62. Agr. 1922, p. 11.
63. Frankenberger, Agrarismus..., p. 18, 20, 22.
64. Agr. 1922, p. 11-12.
65. Nat.Soc. 1931, p.88-89.
66. See chapter 2 above, p. 80-82.
67. Program a organizační řád československé živnostensko-obchodnické strany středostavovské (Prague, 1929), p. 3. (Hereafter known as Trade. 1929.)
68. Ibid., p. 5.
69. Ibid., p. 5.
70. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 41.
71. Vašek, Rukojeť..., p. 148.
72. Ibid., p. 149; Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 42.
73. Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 92.
74. Ibid., p. 14; Soc.Dem. 1930, p. 8; Protokol první, p. 2. The Communist Party later spoke of "neutralising" the proletarianised middle estate, Protokol druhý, p. 112.
75. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 42-43; Trade. 1929, p. 9. This call was not translated into action, the 1925 Pensions Act for the self-employed never came into force.
76. Agr. 1922, p. 61-62; Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 41-42.
77. Pop. 1920, p. 46; Trade. 1929, p. 7; Lidové listy, 30 September 1927, p. 3. In 1933 there was actually legislation to protect small traders against "one-price stores", but it did not prevent the further expansion of firms such as Baťa; see Zdeněk Deyl, "K ekonomickým...", p. 723-724, footnote 38.
78. Trade. 1929, p. 11.
79. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 44; Pop. 1920, p. 46.
80. See chapter 2 above, p. 69.
81. Soc.Dem. 1930, p. 7; Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 14; Protokol první, p. 2.
82. Nat. Soc. 1918, p. 8; Soc.Dem. 1919, p. 3.

83. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 46; Pop. 1920, p. 47.
84. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 44; Pop. 1920, p. 47.
85. Pop. 1920, p. 47.
86. See chapter 4, p. 29.
87. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 46.
88. Agr. 1922, p. 63.
89. Trade. 1929, p. 4.
90. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 43.
91. See p. 104 above.
92. Pop. 1920, p. 43.
93. Protokol první, p. 12; Protokol pátého řádného sjezdu komunistické strany Československa (Prague, n.d.), p. 9, 207. (Hereafter known as Program pátý.)
94. Protokol pátý, p. 207
95. Pop. 1920, p. 12; 21. See Marwick, Class..., p. 67 on the equation of the consumption of tinned food as a characteristic of working-class life.
96. Pop. 1920, p. 11.
97. The infant mortality rate in Bohemia in 1930 was 112.3 for every 1000 births, in comparison to 69 in France, and 59 in England; the only countries in Europe with a higher infant mortality rate than Czechoslovakia were Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Rumania. See Marko Weirich, Staré a nové Československo (Prague, 1938-1939), p. 28-29.
98. Pop. 1920, p. 15-16; see also chapter
99. Soc.Dem. 1930, p. 12-15.
100. Ibid., p. 15.
101. Vašek, Rukojeť..., p. 139; Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 43.
102. Lidové listy, 30 September 1927, p. 2.
103. Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 83
104. The National Democrats did not want reforms to be at the expense of "productivity and entrepreneurship" Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 44. The Agrarians were opposed to any reforms which would be carried out "at the expense of farmers", Agr. 1922, p. 73.
105. Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 14.

- 106: Protokol první, p. 2; Protokol třetího řádného sjezdu komunistické strany Československa (Prague, 1925), p. 25-27. (Hereafter known as Protokol třetí.)
107. Protokol třetí, p. 25-27.
108. Trade 1929, p. 3.
109. Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 42.
110. Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 81.
111. See chapter 6, p. 258.
112. Agr. 1922, p. 15.
- 113: Ibid., p. 25-26; Nat.Dem. 1919, p. 40.
114. Protokol druhý, p. 112; Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 89.
115. Protokol šestý, p. 112.
116. With the exception of the Slovak Populists, who were far more concerned with emphasising national distinctions.
117. See chapter 2, p. 72, 75-76.

## Chapter 4

Academic perceptions of class, estate and statusI Introduction

The material analysed in this chapter comprises a range of scholarly writings on the nature of class; the structure of society; and the character of individual social groups. Most of the works consulted could be described as sociological, although some were of a more rigorous analytical nature than others<sup>1</sup>. The qualification 'academic' has been used to exclude purely journalistic accounts of society (which are cited rather as 'informal perceptions' in a later chapter), and also those political polemics which can be seen simply as an extension of party ideology<sup>2</sup>.

Most of the works analysed here were the works of Czech (or Moravian) authors. The Sociological Seminar of the Masaryk University in Brno was particularly noted for its interest in empirical sociology, and many of the surveys quoted were based on social research undertaken in Moravia. The Slovaks had only one sociologist of any note in the inter-war period, Anton Štefánek, who became Professor of Applied Sociology at Bratislava University in 1937. Although both the Slovak student organisation in Prague, Detvan, and the Communist journal DAV, produced extensive village surveys, these were factual chronicles of rural poverty, intended to inform and shock, rather than works of social analysis as such. Their findings have been used in the final chapter on the 'reality' of

II A class society?

'Class' per se was never a major preoccupation of inter-war scholarly writers. The word itself was perhaps too emotive, too closely associated with Marxist doctrine, to encourage non-polemical debates. Indeed, two of the encyclopaedic dictionaries published during this period, Chalupný's Economic, Political and Social Dictionary and the Slovak Encyclopaedia, had no entry for 'class', but only for 'class war'<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, in Czechoslovakia sociology was a comparatively new discipline, and academic sociologists were often more concerned to define the aims and methodology of their subject than to tackle such a complex, and potentially sensitive, issue as class<sup>5</sup>. Contributions to the stratification debate were, therefore, limited to a few articles and published lectures. There was no attempt to emulate Theodor Geiger's thorough analysis of German society, Die Soziale Schichtung des Deutschen Volkes, let alone the American socio-anthropological approach to community stratification<sup>6</sup>. The first such work was produced by an American Czech in the 1950s, and such retrospective analysis does not concern us here<sup>7</sup>.

Inter-war sociologists and other scholarly writers did not really question the issue of whether classes could be said to exist. In the tradition of European political sociology, this presupposition was taken for granted. However, none of the major sociological theorists was a Marxist, and each, in his different way, sought to

deny the idea of the ultimate polarisation of society between capital and labour.

The theories with the widest popular currency were those of Masaryk. He had taught and influenced leading figures of inter-war sociology such as Professor Arnošt Bláha from Brno, and his writings formed part of the civic studies syllabus in schools throughout the Czechoslovak republic. In The Social Question, first published in 1898, Masaryk denied that society was divided into "two great classes". He claimed that Marx's "bourgeoisie" and "proletariat" were both divided into a "whole hierarchy of interests, classes and subclasses", and that the "so-called middle estate" had failed to disappear as the socialists predicted. Masaryk also refused to accept the absolute supremacy of economic factors in social relations, pointing to the additional influence of nationality, of voluntary associations, and of the divide between town and country. All added to the complexity of social divisions, and Masaryk claimed, too, to see "more love and solidarity in society than Marx would allow". He did not totally discount the idea of class war, but perceived it as a fragmented struggle, which was often counter-balanced by common interests<sup>9</sup>.

Inter-war sociologists followed Masaryk in denying that class was totally determined by relationship to the means of production. The first to address himself to the analysis of class was Jan Mertl, a leading member of the Prague School of Sociology<sup>10</sup>. He claimed that classes existed in the human consciousness, in the judgments

which "everyone makes many times every day about his own, or others', class status", on the basis of the "specific objective criteria" of material standard of living, education, and social contacts<sup>11</sup>. The conclusion which Mertl drew could hardly be described as innovatory; he distinguished three classes, the "bourgeoisie", the "middle class", and the "proletariat". He acknowledged his debt to Leopold von Wiese's Einführung in die Sozialpolitik, although he had substituted "bourgeoisie" for von Wiese's "aristocracy", as being more appropriate for contemporary, republican, society<sup>12</sup>.

Mertl did produce an alternative terminology for his three classes: "super-normal", "normal", and "sub-normal". He must have felt these labels to be somewhat artificial as, in practice, he hardly used them himself. They did, however, permit him to explain that his three-fold division of society was based on a certain norm of income, education, and social level. A proletarian was, therefore, to be understood as someone who lived permanently below the "normal" level of his society, and a member of the bourgeoisie as someone who lived above it<sup>13</sup>.

Mertl was not particularly precise about the social, or occupational, groups included in his three classes. Of the "proletariat", he explained that it should not be totally equated with the working class, since an increasing number of skilled workers, with specialist training, belonged rather to the middle class in their attitudes and way of life. The middle class he described as a heterogeneous group of individuals from many different profes-



sions, eventually identifying it primarily with the bureaucracy and the artisanate (the Czech word, řemeslnictvo, implied self-employed artisans, who might perhaps have several employees working for them). The "bourgeoisie" was hardly discussed at all<sup>14</sup>.

Mertl's analysis was somewhat banal, but it does, nevertheless, reveal certain assumptions about the nature of society which correspond to a basic pattern established in previous chapters. Political party programmes, for instance, had tended to gloss over the existence of an upper stratum, or strata, in society. The claim that a working-class aristocracy was no longer an integral part of the proletariat was a salient feature of Communist ideology in the inter-war period; it was also given a certain credence by the official practice of classing foremen as non-manual employees in social insurance legislation. It is, moreover, significant that Mertl identified small businessmen, officials and some highly-skilled workers as the "normal" class; these are the occupational groups which the National Socialist Party epitomised as the "little man"<sup>15</sup>. Although in Weimar Germany the "little man" was regarded with less than admiration, it is clear that, for the Czechs, he was if anything a 'social hero' - the representative of the social norm<sup>16</sup>.

Jan Mertl's work on class elicited a response from a fellow sociologist of the Prague School, Karel Galla. Galla took a more critical stance towards theoretical studies of class than Mertl, condemning attempts to force the "rich reality of society" into schemes. He suggested that

sociologists ought to undertake extensive empirical research before producing any new attempts to define the nature of social stratification<sup>17</sup>. Galla's understanding of what was meant by class - as distinct from social stratum - was peculiarly narrow. He recognised as a class only a social group which was aware of its inferior position, and was making collective efforts to improve its lot. In contemporary society this meant the working class, and other groups were to be regarded as "strata", rather than as classes "in the true sense of the word"<sup>18</sup>. Galla's interpretation agreed with contemporary usage, for only workers were habitually described as a class (dělnická třída) in colloquial speech<sup>19</sup>.

Unlike Mertl, Galla did not believe in the existence of a "middle class" in contemporary society.

The middle class is a fiction created by certain political parties. They wish to unite individuals of a higher living standard: small businessmen, shopkeepers, trade personnel, lower and higher officials, industrialists and so on, against the lower strata of the proletariat, who are mainly organised by the socialist parties. However, there are differences in education, profession and tradition between these strata... which prevent their sharing a common class feeling. 20

Ladislav Neuman, who summarised Mertl's and Galla's views for the Social Democrat's political journal, Akademie, agreed with Galla on this point. He pointed to the great economic differences between a successful businessman and a poorly-paid employee, and concluded "The 'middle' stratum is a political concept, not a sociological concept"<sup>21</sup>. Examination of the party programmes supports this conclusion.

Even those parties which wished to stress the idea of there being a 'middle estate', in practice dealt with the interests of officials, businessmen and peasant farmers separately, or concentrated on one group at the expense of the rest<sup>22</sup>.

In contrast to Mertl, whose theories showed a distinct urban bias, Galla also sought to emphasise that the division between town and country added a further dimension to social stratification. He explained that the agricultural worker felt more class solidarity with the higher strata of the agricultural population than with the urban worker, or the badly-paid state official<sup>23</sup>. His Agrarian sympathies were obvious in the claim that:

A tenant farmer who grew up in an urban environment has town habits. Even if his profession is the same as that of a peasant farmer with a largish farm, he is not a member of the peasant stratum in the true sense of the word. He is neither a peasant, a man of the land, homo ruralis, nor a countryman. Similarly, a teacher living in the village is not a countryman if he grew up in a town. But a smallholder /born in the country/ employed as a publican, a greengrocer, or an artisan, is a countryman... 24

Although their views of what actually constituted 'class' varied, both Mertl and Galla acknowledged its importance in contemporary social relationships. They were willing to admit, too, to the existence of 'class war', which they viewed as a struggle by the proletariat for social and economic justice<sup>25</sup>. Neither, however, accepted the idea of an economically-determined fight to the death between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. They believed that social divisions were becoming less, rather than more,

sharply defined. Mertl spoke of the "continual growth of the middle class", and suggested that rising educational and economic standards for the working class and falling standards for the upper class were leading to a certain equalisation in society<sup>26</sup>. Galla claimed that:

In modern times there is a certain standardisation in clothing, food, entertainments and reading matter... just as a certain norm of elementary education is being established. This normalisation has removed some of the external differences which used to be so striking. 27

He added that those who "stood on the lowest step of the social ladder" were now allowed free time to spend with their families, or to devote to sport, or the furthering of their education, if they should so wish - an obvious reference to the legislation for an eight-hour day, and for holidays with pay for workers<sup>28</sup>.

The most thorough exposition of the theory that the social classes were growing closer together was given in Zdeněk Ullrich's study of "Social Structure Today", published in the journal of the Prague School of Sociology in 1934<sup>29</sup>. Ullrich's main concern was to mount an attack on Marx's theories of class. Using arguments reminiscent of Weber and Geiger, he pointed in evidence to the rise of the tertiary sector, the growing number of white-collar employees, an increase in the total number of employees as compared to self-employed persons, political equality for all, the growth of the mass culture of cinema, newspapers, novels, radio and gramophone, and the growing penetration of mass organisations, cooperatives and political parties into

everyday life. He concluded that:

On the whole, the situation here suggests that there is a continual rapprochement on many fronts between the various strata of the population, and that all the factors which define society into unified, clearly delimited, and at least partly homogeneous strata are disappearing. 30

Like Galla, Ullrich drew attention to advances in social and employment legislation since independence, especially the eight-hour day, and suggested that factory workers "are no longer a social stratum whose way of life is clearly separated from that of the rest of society"<sup>31</sup>. Although he admitted that this judgement applied only to skilled workers, he glossed over the low standard of living of unskilled workers, and did not mention the unemployed at all.

Ullrich's article came under attack from the political left at the time of publication. An article in Čin suggested that social differentiation was a particularly delicate practical question, and hinted that "the standpoint of our history, philosophy and sociology [to it] is determined by politics, rather than by science"<sup>32</sup>. Ullrich was quick to deny that political motivation had led him to "shift attention" from the "facts of social differentiation"<sup>33</sup>. Nevertheless, the idea that social divisions were becoming "equalised" (nivelisace) was a theory much favoured by the political establishment; in 1936, the Czechoslovak National Council produced an exposition of The Idea of the Czechoslovak State, and the chapter on the "Social Composition of Our State" ended with the

claim: "There is a transformation of our social structure whereby once diverse social strata are becoming increasingly united". Ullrich's article was cited in the bibliography<sup>34</sup>.

Despite the widespread agreement amongst non-Marxist sociologists that Czechoslovak society was developing towards greater social homogeneity, their writings suggest that social divisions were still quite clearly recognisable. Karel Galla took as a commonplace the idea that:

We sit in a train, and introduce ourselves to our neighbour. We exchange a few words, and we soon know what kind of a person he is. We place him in a certain social category on the basis of his speech, the words he uses, his expressions, his clothes, the newspaper he is reading... 35

Otakar Machotka, another sociologist of the Prague School, developed this theme even further by suggesting that the Czechs had a strong sense of hierarchy:

Something of a need for differentiation has remained... not only /amongst/ the descendants of the former nobility... even the lower strata... wish to be distinguished from those still lower. The official does not wish to look like a minor clerk (zřízenec), nor the latter like a worker, nor the foreman like a day-labourer. A very rich person here ought not to carry a heavy parcel, an official must not walk along the street with a heavy case, even a worker would not wish to carry certain ugly or disgusting objects. 36

Machotka's statement implies a society where social divisions still had a real significance. (Unwittingly it also suggests that when the Czechs turned from theory to empirical observation, they tended to lapse into the vocabulary of the census, or for that matter of the polit-

ical parties<sup>37</sup>.)

Amongst the criteria generally accepted in defining such social divisions, three were often singled out for analysis - wealth, way of life, and education. Of these, Mertl claimed that wealth was easily the most significant. He stressed that he, unlike Marx, was less concerned with the actual source of income than with its size and regularity. Size of income had a direct impact on the quality of life, affecting such factors as diet, clothing, housing and the birth and death rates<sup>38</sup>. Regularity of income, according to Mertl, was often the real distinguishing feature between the material situation of an official and a worker. Certainly the political party programmes had emphasised that manual workers were far more subject to fluctuations in the labour market than white-collar employees. Similarly they claimed that white-collar employees were often badly paid<sup>39</sup>.

The idea that size of income did not, in itself, explain the social differences between a worker and an official led Mertl into a discussion of consumption patterns. He was greatly influenced by Maurice Halbwachs's work La classe ouvriere et les niveaux de la vie, and the theory that class differences were revealed most clearly not in the workplace, but in the way that people spent the money they had earned<sup>40</sup>. Mertl took his evidence from an investigation into family budgets undertaken by the State Office of Statistics in 1921/1922. Apparently officials' families spent a far greater percentage of their income on clothes, shoes and linen than workers' families, and Mertl saw this

as an indication of their greater need for "personal representation". Officials also spent far more than workers on books and newspapers, which Mertl explained by reference to their higher level of education. Workers, on the other hand, spent rather more than officials on organisations and clubs, and this was said to illustrate the "organisational unity, typical of the working class, in comparison to the fragmentation of the individualistic middle class" <sup>41</sup>. The idea that "organisational unity" was one feature which distinguished the working class from the other social strata was also basic to Karel Galla's theory of class <sup>42</sup>.

Amongst the other distinguishing features noted by Mertl were the very different leisure pursuits of the various classes. "Football, swimming and cycling" were said to be directed at the "widest strata" of the population. The lower class apparently favoured the hospoda, or pub, as a venue for entertainment, whilst the middle class preferred the kavárna, or coffee house. In perhaps his only specific reference to the upper class of his trichotomous division of society, Mertl mentioned their sports as "tennis, hunting, horse-riding and motoring", pointing out that "a small car is a luxury here", and their social meeting-place as the gentlemen's club <sup>43</sup>. The entries for leading businessmen, politicians and intellectuals in the various collected biographies of the inter-war period certainly bear out Mertl's claims <sup>44</sup>.



Education was readily acknowledged as a crucial status factor in Czechoslovakia. Mertl believed that it had a particularly powerful influence on social awareness:

...the educated individual can no longer, even if he so wished, feel himself to be the equal of members of the lower class from which he rose. They no longer share his joys and sorrows as once they did. Even if the cost of his education has meant that his economic situation has actually worsened, the educated individual can no longer feel class solidarity with his friends<sup>45</sup>.

This observation was applied somewhat mechanically by Mertl to his three-class scheme, and he claimed that education was a factor of great importance in the division between the "proletariat" and the "middle class", but played virtually no role in marking off the "middle class" from the "bourgeoisie"<sup>46</sup>. Karel Galla's handling of the same issue showed a far greater awareness of the subtlety of social divisions within Czechoslovakia. Galla noted that waiters, shop-assistants, valets, foremen and porters were probably no better educated than ordinary servants, or shoe-shiners, or sewer-cleaners, but would certainly consider themselves to belong to a higher social stratum than the latter. Similarly, a short-hand typist would not feel that she belonged to the same social class as a female worker in a tobacco factory, even if she had received the same basic education<sup>47</sup>. Galla's social judgments would normally be confirmed by law; work in a shop or an office was habitually regarded as "higher service", and thereby deserving of superior employment conditions and social benefits than mere manual labour<sup>48</sup>.

Although education may have played a negligible role in

social stratification at the lower end of the social spectrum, Galla did not deny the importance of a secondary school diploma or a university degree as status factors amongst those more highly placed. He pointed out — that the state, for example, graded its employees rigidly according to their formal educational qualifications. In keeping with his Agrarian sympathies, Galla felt that formal educational qualifications were often overvalued by Czechoslovak society:

The official who works for the railways, the engineer in the factory, the peasant who farms scientifically... may all acquire a considerable general and specialist education which, in its depth and range of knowledge, corresponds to a secondary school or university education. However, if they have not actually completed secondary school or university studies, they receive less esteem. Their lack of official education is felt both socially and materially. 49

Such complaints were voiced by the political programmes of both the Agrarian and the Tradesmen's Parties<sup>50</sup>.

The importance which sociologists themselves often attached to education, and to a certain social polish, as marks of superiority, emerges clearly from their discussions of the parvenu. Jan Mertl, for instance, explained that in abnormal circumstances such as wartime, social mobility could be unusually rapid. As a result, people moved up the social scale without losing the characteristics of their previous social class. Mertl seems to have felt considerable scorn for many of the Czechs who had come to prominence as a result of the war, or of independence in 1918. Wartime profiteers were blamed for a general

decline in taste: "We only have to remember the...cabarets, bars, revues and dance-halls which were opened [after the war] for those who had risen from the middle and lower classes to the level of the bourgeoisie"<sup>51</sup>. Mertl also included some ministers in his descriptions of the post-war parvenu; he spoke of political leaders who had risen to high positions without the "necessary" education, and sometimes even without natural intelligence<sup>52</sup>. A similar phenomenon was noted in Slovakia by Anton Štefánek, although in keeping with the more agricultural nature of Slovak society, Štefánek wrote of the rural parvenu, the "gentrified peasant" (popanštení sedliak), who abandoned his national costume, bought up a residual estate from the Land Office, and entered politics<sup>53</sup>. Such scorn for the arriviste was echoed in less formal sources than the pages of academic journals and monographs, and seems characteristic of the response of the intelligentsia to the new elites<sup>54</sup>.

Mertl was similarly concerned about the parvenu who had risen from the lower to the middle class, the "suburban beau" (periferní frajer) who was characterised as: "a passionate follower of football matches and sensational cinema performances", who indulged in "conceited talk" and "flashy clothes", copied from the latest bourgeois fashions. He professed an anxiety that such workers should be educated to use their free time and higher wages "profitably" - an acknowledgement, however reluctant, that the war and the setting-up of the republic had brought new economic and political power to certain sec-

tors of the working class<sup>55</sup>.

The overall impression is of a society in which the traditional social hierarchy was under attack; mass politics, as exemplified by the Agrarian and Socialist Parties, had come into its own, and the intelligentsia, amongst whom can be numbered the authors of these academic treatises, could no longer claim to be the representatives of the nation, as they had in the nineteenth century<sup>56</sup>. Whatever changes had occurred since 1918, sociological writings leave no doubt about the continuing reality of divisions within society. In the words of one of the authors cited above: "much of the former feudal and bureaucratic tradition has survived, maintaining differences between the social strata"<sup>57</sup>. Rank consciousness was still strong, and it sometimes conflicted with the sociologists' desire to appear egalitarian, and to welcome the "levelling-out" of social differences .

Discussion of class could never escape completely from the influence of Marxist tenets, and as a result was somewhat abstract and artificial. Sociologists quickly fell into the habit of using colloquial stereotypes such as "official", even when engaged in very general expositions of social theory. Their writings on specific social and occupational groups reveal a far more intimate picture of inter-war Czechoslovak society than schematic accounts of stratification. Three such groups preoccupied them: the agricultural community, workers and the intelligentsia. These will now be discussed.

### III The agricultural community

The agricultural community was a major preoccupation of inter-war Czechoslovak sociologists and socio-political writers. Rural sociology occupied pride of place in the main sociological journal of this period, the Brno School's Sociologická revue, and research into village life was actively encouraged by both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Czech Academy of Agriculture<sup>58</sup>. To some extent the great interest in rural problems shown in Czechoslovakia was a reflection of the influence of the Agrarian Party, the largest party in the state. However, irrespective of political motivation, there can be no doubt that the peasantry was perceived as a class apart, with its own specific significance for the nation, and as such worthy of investigation by academic writers.

The definition of peasant, sedlák, or sedliak in Slovak, was uncontroversial, and most writings used the term without further comment. Even Bláha, who produced the main theoretical study of the peasantry, limited himself to a brief explanation that the peasant was someone who: "farms the land and produces from the land... the land is the focus of his work and interests"<sup>59</sup>. Discussion focused rather on the issue of whether the peasantry could be seen as a monolithic social group.

The political ideology of the Agrarian Party stressed the idea that "the village is one family"<sup>60</sup>. Sociologists were willing to allow a certain "social closeness" as a feature of village life:

In the village, social differences are not striking, that is to say in the average village where farms are small or medium-sized... There is a comparatively narrow circle of acquaintances, and relationships are multifaceted and long-lasting... village people do not know each other only by sight... but from frequent direct contact. 60

Even the Slovak Communist intellectual, Vladimír Clementis, suggested that class barriers were less distinct in rural than in industrial society, and that class consciousness in the village was often submerged by the forces of "tradition and the whole environment"<sup>61</sup>. Writers more sympathetic to the Agrarian cause were fulsome in their descriptions of the harmony of rural life. Karel Galla, for example, wrote of Dolní Roven:

Individuals have their own ideas about how the relationships between members of the various groups of village inhabitants should be formed ...nine tenths /suggest that they should be/ friendly, comradely. The rest say: brotherly, harmonious, tolerant, "as in a family". 62

Even the most enthusiastic proponents of village unity often testified unwittingly to the existence of a hierarchy based on land ownership. The Agrarian novelist, Josef Holeček, in his treatise The Peasantry, set out the full colloquial hierarchy of rank, in a claim that differences in economic standing were unimportant in comparison to the bond of belonging to the agricultural community:

The dwarf-holder (domkář), the small-holder (chalupník), the small peasant farmer (malý sedlák), the large peasant farmer (velký sedlák), the estate owner (statkář), and the residual-estate owner (zbytkář), all are farmers (rolníci) and the peasantry (selství) must unite them. 63

Karel Galla openly admitted that the villagers of Dolní Roveň:

know very well where to place one or the other individual or family in relationship to the other inhabitants and to other families... People from various social groups and strata are closer to each other than in a town environment, but still the social differences between the strata are visible. 64

Although everyday relationships in the village might be perceived as comradely, academic observers did not doubt that social differentiation was a crucial factor in the choice of marriage partners. Most studies of village life noted that it was virtually unthinkable for the farmer's son to marry the family's serving-maid, or his daughter the čeledín<sup>65</sup>. In Dolní Roveň, for instance, "the peasant farmer marries the peasant's daughter, the smallholder a girl from a small-holding... marriages between people who are not economically equal are considered to be mésalliances". Physical and emotional attraction were considered to be of secondary importance in comparison to economic consideration<sup>66</sup>.

Discussions about the nature of social relationships in the village invariably touched on the quality of the ties between master and man. The fact that the farmer and his čeled often ate at the same table was cited as an example of the closeness of the agricultural community, fostered by mutual service to the land. In the words of Arnošt Eláha:

Everyone, the farmer, his wife, the čeledín, the maid-servant, are somehow on the same level, provided that they have a good relationship to the

land and to their work... Neither in way of life, nor dress, nor living conditions is there much difference between them. 67

However, some writers felt that the old patriarchal "family relationship" was under attack. Josef Holeček painted a very romantic view of the friendship and trust of pre-war times, and claimed that, in the independent republic:

The čeledín no longer turns to his master as to a father figure for advice about his affairs; he does not waste an unnecessary word on him; he steps out of the way if they should chance to meet. His adviser in minor affairs is the nearest party official, in more important things, he turns to the socialist advocate in Prague. 68

Since 1918, the čeledě had been freed from the constriction of a semi-feudal work contract, granted a vote and, for the first time, given certain rights to social insurance benefits. His position was no longer one of almost complete dependence on his employer. That this militated against the old deferential attitudes is clear from Holeček's outburst.

Sociologists were agreed that social mobility amongst the agricultural community was very low. Upward mobility through education was not common, in part because the choice of schools in rural areas was often very limited. As Antonín Obrdlík pointed out, in a study of rural social mobility:

How many times does the less-talented son of an artisan get to secondary school, and even to university, simply because his father lives in the town where these schools are situated, whereas the most talented son of a villager will, at the very most, learn a trade. 69



The peasantry was also said to mistrust education as somehow irrelevant to the realities of their everyday life. A study of the Moravian village of Neslovice suggested that the secondary school's aims of giving its pupils a wide basic education, and preparing them for study at a university, were: "too distant, and too foreign for the mentality of a country person"<sup>70</sup>. According to Bláha, the narrow range of experiences provided by village life tended to result, anyway, in an almost religious sense of determinism. "He who is born in a peasant farmer's household, and stays there, becomes a peasant farmer; the child of a day labourer becomes a day labourer"<sup>71</sup>.

Descriptions of the peasant's physical and psychological characteristics showed a distinct tendency to condescension and cliché. Bláha explained that the typical peasant had a robust, massive, solidly-built body, and that the nature of his work left him with certain muscles in his calves, thighs and shoulders over-developed. His speech was "truly rustic, the words seem to be hard clods, which he turns over in his mouth carefully and sparingly"<sup>72</sup>. Both Bláha and Štefánek noted a tendency towards inbreeding: "The peasantry can be called an endogamous social stratum... marriage comparatively rarely brings in non-peasant elements...", and Bláha suggested that peasants, as a result, sometimes exhibited inferior mental powers<sup>73</sup>. Bláha further observed that the peasant's heavy diet meant that he was more than usually susceptible to stomach troubles, and that peasant children often suffered from the physical effects of poor hygiene and bad housing condit-

ions, despite their otherwise healthy environment<sup>74</sup>.

Of the peasant's psychological characteristics, the most often stressed was what Bláha called zemitost, or closeness to the earth; to hold on to inherited land at all costs, and to increase his landholdings, were claimed as the main aims of the peasant's life. His relationship to his land was central to his whole existence<sup>75</sup>.

The pace of life was dictated by the agricultural calendar, and the peasant was largely isolated from the outside world by the nature of his work. Štefánek described the peasant's main desires thus:

to live, to work, to be happy and to be sad in one place, in one home, on one farm, in one community... It is true that the peasant does not have sufficient understanding for the state, for the homeland in the wider sense... He is interested in everything connected with his native village... What is geographically distant, is unknown to him psychologically, politically, and socially, and far from his heart. 76

The peasant's relationship with the outside world reflected many underlying contradictions and tensions. The Czech writer, Antonín Paleček, a self-proclaimed disciple of ruralism, blamed the negative influence of the feudal past, claiming that:

Feudal society did not recognise the peasant... as a political and cultural being, and assigned to him simply the social function of work and production... He was felt to be incapable of higher tasks. 77

The peasant was said to be inward-looking, and to be deeply suspicious of his masters, of bureaucracy, of the towns and of the intelligentsia<sup>78</sup>. Bláha noted that a

growing 'estate consciousness', carefully fostered by the Agrarian press and party organisations, frequently took on unsympathetic forms ("We feed you all") and that townspeople were viewed as "parasites and... exploiters... of the life-giving peasant organism"<sup>79</sup>. On the other hand, the town could be regarded as a kind of Mecca, especially for young people from peasant backgrounds. Bláha spoke of girls who went into service in the towns quickly learning to view village life as "low, imperfect and distasteful"<sup>80</sup>. It was acknowledged that urban areas offered higher wages, shorter working hours, better living conditions and greater cultural opportunities<sup>81</sup>. This led to a certain resentment amongst villagers, because they felt that they, too, deserved "their share of the affluence which they believe to be abundant in the towns"<sup>82</sup>.

In Slovakia, where the peasant had remained subordinate, uneducated and without political rights far longer than his Czech counterpart, descriptions of the peasantry stressed not resentment and pride, but rather a tendency to self-denigration. Anton Štefánek noted that "our people have a touching respect for 'gentlemen'", and blamed this on the traditions of Hungarian society<sup>83</sup>. The politician, Vavro Šrobár, spoke of Slovak "submissiveness", and claims about the "dove-like temperament" of the Slovak peasant abound in studies of national character<sup>84</sup>.

If the peasantry's attitude to the rest of society was somewhat ambivalent, so, apparently, was that of the non-agricultural population to the peasant. Štefánek made a

the perceptive observation that:

The peasant, and the countryman in general, is to a certain extent to be pitied. Either the townspeople and the gentleman look down on him as a stupid peasant or they praise him to the skies with a spurious and romantic love, as a hardworking, honourable, religious, witty, modest and decent type. 85

Agrarian sympathisers, like Josef Holeček, certainly gave lyrical accounts of the peasant's good qualities, whereas a far less sympathetic observer, like Mojmír Hájek, could note that his contact with the peasants of Neslovice in Moravia awoke in him an instinctive antipathy to their pride, vanity and greed<sup>86</sup>. The overall picture of peasant temperament which emerges from academic writings is, if anything, unattractive, stressing the narrowness and conservatism of the peasant's outlook on life, his egoism and his acquisitiveness<sup>87</sup>. Yet both Czech and Slovak intellectuals were keenly aware of the role played by the peasantry in keeping their respective languages and national cultures alive. As one apologist claimed:

The peasantry is hallowed by its antiquity. It is the founder of the nation, the nucleus and creator of national society. It is the founder of the motherland and her bravest defender. 88

The peasantry might sometimes be seen as a problem, but sociologists claimed that the worst features of peasant character and rural life were being alleviated by socio-economic and technological change. Arnošt Bláha concluded his monographic study of the peasantry with a chapter entitled "the new situation in the village", in which he spoke of vast improvements in living conditions, higher stand-

ards in clothing and furniture and, in particular, of the infinitely better communications with the outside world in comparison with the 1880s, when a peasant "rarely left his village"<sup>89</sup>. Karel Galla, describing, in his study of Dolní Roveň, a village which was both affluent and in the forefront of change, stressed the new degree of technical maturity encouraged by specialist agricultural training and the beneficial effects of cooperatives. He claimed that the peasant's tendency to irrationality and superstition was being overcome, and that the old egocentricity of peasant life was breaking down<sup>90</sup>. Certainly the picture of an isolated, inbred, backward and superstitious peasantry was, in the inter-war years, more likely to be true of Slovakia than of the rich agricultural lands of Central and East Bohemia, or the Haná region of Moravia.

Fundamental to the various analyses of the peasantry was an awareness that the divide between town and country was an important feature of social stratification in both Czech and Slovak societies. Within the peasant community, basic divisions according to land ownership were acknowledged, as was a certain difference in interests between the landowner and his hired labourer. However, the sense of belonging to a rural community was seen as being, on the whole, stronger than awareness of internal divisions - a viewpoint which tallied with the impression given by party programmes<sup>91</sup>. This sense of separateness may have been weakening under the impact of modernisation, but non-Agrarian observers, such as Bláha, were nonetheless still troubled by it.

IV Manual workers

Karel Galla, in Classes in Society and the Class War, claimed that the best researched group in contemporary society was the working class<sup>92</sup>. This was not, perhaps, an accurate assessment of the priorities of Czechoslovak sociology, since rural studies tended to predominate in the inter-war years. Yet there was undoubtedly considerable interest in the industrial working class amongst sociologists and socio-political writers of the period. To some extent this was the result of a preoccupation with radical politics, and frequent references were made, normally critical, to Marxist doctrine<sup>93</sup>. The positivist spirit which underlay the work of the Brno School of Sociology, in particular, prompted studies of working-class life as a means to promote social cohesion. As Professor Arnošt Bláha explained, in a lecture to the Masaryk Sociological Society in 1930:

the welfare of the whole [of society] is dependent on the welfare of the individual parts ... One of the most powerful sources of class conflict is the fact that the two sides do not know each other. To know one another, [to know] one's function and position within the framework of general utility... this is the advantage that scientific knowledge can bring to the solution of social conflicts. 94

There was little debate about the definition of 'worker' (dělník, or robotník in Slovak). Like the authors of the political party programmes, most sociologists took the meaning of this term as self-evident<sup>95</sup>. The exception here was Bláha. In an article on workers' psychology, published in Naše Doba in 1923, Bláha claimed that two

crucial distinctions were involved in the satisfactory explanation of the word 'worker'. The first was the divide between mental and manual work, although Bláha, like his mentor Masaryk, acknowledged that this could never be absolute; no occupation was totally manual, demanding no thought whatsoever, or totally mental, requiring no physical effort.<sup>96</sup> The second was the differentiation between those people engaged in work of a primarily manual nature, who owned the means of production (farmers, tradesmen, artisans and shopkeepers, for example), and manual workers, who owned only their labour. Bláha arrived at the following definition of a "worker":

a person engaged in physical labour who, although not formally tied by his labour, is in practice dependent and unfree because of the conditions of labour. A person who does not own the means of production and, therefore, is not an organiser, but is himself organised. 97

There was general agreement amongst sociologists that the working class was not a monolithic social group. The existence of both an "aristocracy of labour", which could potentially be subject to embourgeoisement, and of a kind of underclass, or Lumpenproletariat, was widely accepted, although the exact boundaries of these categories were the cause of some dispute. Jan Mertl, for example, in an article on "Workers as a Social Class", claimed a three-fold division of the working class. At the bottom came "tramps, beggars, prostitutes, unskilled and seasonal workers", who were said, at a time of revolutionary turmoil, to be capable of the most brutish force, of pillaging and massacres. In more normal times, according to

Mertl, they were an embarrassment to the working class movement, lacking in class consciousness, parasites fit only to be the object of social care<sup>98</sup>. Above them were workers with a higher standard of living, who had gained class consciousness as a result of socialist ideology. Finally, Mertl distinguished a stratum of skilled workers, whose standard of living approached that of the middle class, and who therefore tended to lose interest in revolutionary politics, abandoning politically-motivated Trades Unions for professional interest groups<sup>99</sup>.

Arnošt Bláha's picture of divisions within the working class was rather more complex. At the lowest level, he claimed, were those workers who had retained something of the old "serf mentality". Their poverty was greater than that of the rest of the working class, they were untouched by class consciousness, and often inferior by heredity. They worked only occasionally, if at all, because they loathed labour, preferring vagrancy, theft and crime<sup>100</sup>. Like Mertl, Bláha saw this stratum as the most likely to form an uncontrolled mob:

During workers' demonstrations, it is they who ... with their plundering and pillaging lusts, their eccentricities and lack of discipline, besmirch the pure shield of the working class. 101

Bláha saw this lowest stratum as a collection of somewhat degenerate individuals; he placed unskilled workers, day labourers in agriculture and industry, and servants above them in the social scale. Then came educated, skilled workers, who were fully conscious of their class adherence. Bláha claimed that this class-conscious stratum



was itself divided by an internal hierarchy, with certain occupations, such as mining, or metal-working, being pre-eminent. At the highest level of all were foremen, who often identified with their employers, rather than with their fellow workers<sup>102</sup>.

Otakar Machotka, who undertook an empirical survey of needy families in Prague in 1931, was also concerned to explore the nature of divisions within the working class. He discerned a hard core of people amongst the Prague poor, who lacked intelligence and moral and social fibre, and for whom poverty was a hereditary condition<sup>103</sup>. Machotka, like Mertl, identified this lowest stratum of the poor with unskilled workers<sup>104</sup>. Day labourers, domestic servants, and members of other occupations which required little or no specialist training were said to be much less able to organise their lives than skilled workers. They were less likely, for example, to clean their flats, or to maintain basic standards of hygiene, or to undertake simple repairs themselves. The level of infant mortality was higher amongst the unskilled than the skilled, family bonds weaker, and "concubinage" much more common<sup>105</sup>. Skilled workers might have been forced into extreme poverty by the economic crisis, but, Machotka claimed, they gave the impression that their situation might improve under better economic conditions. They retained their "work morale, discipline of character and... higher social ideals", whereas unskilled workers were "used to their bad economic conditions"<sup>106</sup>.

The sociologists' classification of manual workers into various social strata had, of course, its parallels in both official sources and in the party ideologies. The notion of there being an underclass of undeserving poor was present in the provisions of social legislation, although it was not identified quite so uncompromisingly with unskilled workers as in the writings of Mertl and Machotka<sup>107</sup>. Social legislation also recognised foremen as being distinct from the rest of manual workers, whilst Communist doctrine included certain categories of well-paid skilled workers, too, amongst those whom it considered to be a separate social group<sup>108</sup>.

Despite the divisions which sociologists claimed to perceive within the working class, both Jan Mertl and Arnošt Bláha postulated the thesis that there was a working-class psychological and physiological type. Social Darwinist ideas were often quoted by Czech sociologists, the favoured source being a work by Alfredo Niceforo, which was cited by both Mertl and Bláha<sup>109</sup>. Mertl suggested that the appalling social conditions suffered by the working class in the nineteenth century had given rise to a large stratum of proletarians which was physically and mentally inferior by heredity. He quoted Niceforo's claim that children born to the proletariat in large towns were degenerate in comparison to those of the "better-off" strata of the population<sup>110</sup>. Mertl made political capital of this suggestion:

The observations of contemporary social science overturn those romantic notions about the proletariat as a national reservoir of

'culturally unspoiled, healthy strata', who could themselves create a new and higher culture, which have hitherto ruled the thoughts of so many radical socialists. 111

Bláha, too, suggested that the working class suffered from physical, "physio-psychic", and social inferiority. He placed particular blame for this on the dreadful housing conditions suffered by many workers, preferring to emphasize environment rather than heredity, as the "root of the physical and moral evil which is affecting a considerable part of national society"<sup>112</sup>.

Bláha explained in some detail what he meant by a working-class 'type'. The description given relied heavily on cliché, and contrived to be both naive and condescending. The worker was said to be pale and thin, with sharp features, which looked as if they had been forcibly carved by the "hard hand of necessity". His hand was deformed by work, and his grip was described as a "speech without words". His movements, gestures, dress and speech were "natural, distinctive rather than artificial, a reflection of the obligations of life, rather than the pressure of social conventions". This "distinctive, somewhat repellent lack of affection" meant that a worker was instantly recognisable, even if dressed in his "Sunday best". According to Bláha, the worker also had a distinct "psychic profile". He was said to feel cast out and isolated from society. His family ties were weaker than those of the other social strata. His relationship with his employer was a relationship between the powerless and the powerful, lacking in warmth, humanity and ethical values, which

eventually led him and his fellow workers to the kind of collective hatred for the state and the higher classes that could easily be exploited by demagogues<sup>113</sup>.

The gloomy picture of the working class painted by both Mertl and Bláha was mitigated by their belief that the worker's situation was gradually improving. They pointed to the growing power of the Trades Unions and working-class political parties, and to social legislation such as the eight-hour day, as indications that the worker's economic and social position was being transformed<sup>114</sup>.

Both drew attention to changes in working-class lifestyles, as did a pupil of Bláha's, Jaroslav Hanáček, who undertook an empirical survey of "working-class self-consciousness" in the late 1930s<sup>115</sup>. In each case the intention was to show that "the upright worker no longer feels that he is banished [from society], but rather that he is an important factor in economic life"<sup>116</sup>.

Hanáček claimed, for example, that workers' growing confidence in their own value to society was marked by a changing style of dress. Before the war, class-conscious workers had tried to achieve a style - dark clothes, wide hats - which marked them out from the other social strata. The modern worker, however, followed the same fashions as the "bourgeois" strata. Hanáček made the not uncommon assertion that it was often impossible to distinguish between the clothes of a working-class woman, and those of an official's or a tradesman's wife<sup>117</sup>. Arnošt Bláha had, of course, suggested that it was not so much clothes, as the

manner of wearing them, and general behaviour, which distinguished the worker from the higher social strata. However, even he commented on the worker's new:

sense of taste and elegance, which helps both to remove the external differences between the classes, and to influence the worker's behaviour, for he who is well-dressed also tries to be well-behaved. 118

Both Bláha and Hanáček observed improvements in working-class speech. Bláha suggested that workers used to seem rough, and even repulsive, in their "directness and unaffected use of expressions and forms", but that they were becoming more refined in their speech. He saw in this development the "considerable influence" of an increasing interest in "newspapers, books, music, lectures, specialist courses and public libraries"<sup>119</sup>. Hanáček, in his turn, noted that workers' speech was getting closer to the standard of the higher strata. If they spoke colloquially, they eschewed vulgarity, unlike, he claimed, many of the "so-called better strata"<sup>120</sup>.

Workers were also said to show much more sympathy for the traditional ideals of home and family than had been the case before the war. Bláha subscribed to Halbwachs's theory that the working class had different consumption patterns and priorities from the higher classes. He claimed that workers still felt less need for a tasteful, well-appointed flat than officials, even if their income rose. Nonetheless, he suggested that the standard of housing was improving<sup>121</sup>. Hanáček acknowledged that the working class was still much worse housed than the other

social strata; few could afford to own their own homes, and the majority had extremely small flats. He claimed, though, to find increasing evidence that working-class families were houseproud, painting and decorating, maintaining high standards of cleanliness, especially in the kitchen, and often keeping flowers and houseplants, though not pictures<sup>122</sup>.

Improvements in living conditions were one aspect of the greater emphasis on family life which the sociologists found amongst the working class. Hanáček noted that skilled workers, in particular, were very family-orientated, spending most of their free time in the family home, and far less money on smoking, or personal amusements, than they did on their homes and families. Their children were well-fed and well-dressed, and encouraged to continue their education, at least to the level of trade school, or commercial academy<sup>123</sup>. Eláha noted that the legislation for an eight-hour day, in particular, had "freed the worker's spirit", and improved his "family morality", and claimed that a tradition of working-class family life was gradually being built up<sup>124</sup>.

Fundamental to all these remarks about the working class was the desire to show that the worker was a fully-integrated part of the community, and that he no longer subscribed to the doctrines of class war. This claim was most striking in Hanáček's work, which was undertaken in the late 1930s, a time of considerable threat from Germany. Hanáček explained that the Marxist orientation of the working class before the First World War had been

considerably undermined during the years of independence. In the small Moravian town of Přerov, he found very few people who subscribed regularly to Právo Lidu, the Social Democrats' daily newspaper, and most of them reported that they did not read the ideological and theoretical articles. Hanáček went on to report that political meetings were underattended, and that workers reacted in a hostile way to speeches which stressed class injustice, preferring to hear about working-class achievements<sup>125</sup>. Jan Mertl was equally emphatic about the decline in sympathy for Marxist ideology:

The image of the proletarian with the clenched fist, who thinks of nothing but revolution, today belongs only to the columns of Rudé Právo not to reality... The real average member of today's proletariat finds much more satisfaction in the cinema, where he is shown, with romantic sentimentality, the luxurious life of the bourgeoisie, or at a football match, than in brochures of Marxist literature. <sup>126</sup>

What is perhaps most telling about the various studies of the worker cited above is the spirit in which they were written. Observations sometimes had the tone of an anthropological enquiry into the exotic unknown. The social distance between the academic and the worker is obvious from the rather condescending way in which the working class was described and 'improvements' in their life-style noted. It is important, too, to note that the 'new' working man of, for example, Hanáček's study belonged to the ranks of skilled workers and tradesunion members<sup>127</sup>. Whatever the improvements in social legislation and housing since independence, research amongst the unskilled and the unemployed, like Machotka's survey of

socially-deprived families in Prague, suggest that the living conditions and family relationships of certain sectors of the working class were very far removed from the sociologists' ideal of embourgeoisement<sup>128</sup>.

However, sociologists were very much aware that "society must not be divided internally if it is to put on an outward show of power and productivity"<sup>129</sup>. So there was considerable incentive to picture the worker as "no longer the pariah in national society, but an equal amongst equals...conscious of his meaning for, and duty towards, the whole nation"<sup>130</sup>

#### V The intelligentsia

F.X. Šalda, the best-known literary critic of the inter-war period, claimed of the intelligentsia, "They are written about, they are lectured about, wherever you turn, you cannot fail to come across them"<sup>131</sup>. No serious cultural or political journal was complete without a regular feature on the "crisis of the intelligentsia", often couched in purely abstract terms, although sometimes attempting rather to redefine the political role of the intelligentsia, who could no longer, as in the nineteenth century, expect to lead the nation as of right<sup>132</sup>. The works of Karl Mannheim and Julien Benda were much discussed, and the Czech sociologist, Arnošt Bláha, himself contributed to the wider European debate on the role of the intelligentsia through the pages of Revue internationale de sociologie<sup>133</sup>.



In common with many other countries in Continental Europe, there was a distinct sense amongst both the Czechs and the Slovaks that people with a certain level of education had a cultural identity which, in some way, marked them off from the rest of the population. However, in the Czech Lands, the educated strata had expanded considerably since the Imperial School Act of 1869, whilst in Slovakia post-1918 educational reforms had a similar result, and this led to their gradual loss of cohesiveness as a social group<sup>134</sup>. Anton Štefánek, writing during the Second World War, commented that "the /Slovak/ intelligentsia used to be an elite, today they are becoming a mass /social stratum/"<sup>135</sup>. The inter-war period was marked by considerable debate about the precise meaning of the terms "intelligentsia" and "intellectuals", which in part reflected the influence of this growing social diversity.

Even before the First World War, Masaryk had suggested that there was a considerable distinction to be made between work of a "higher", "creative" kind and ordinary mental work. "In science, in philosophy, in art, in politics, in technology, everywhere the true thinker and artist is to be distinguished from the mere 'labourer'."<sup>136</sup>. A supplement to the pre-war edition of Otto's Encyclopaedic Dictionary, published in 1933, claimed:

A distinction is gradually developing in the living language between the intelektuál, the person who is genuinely active culturally, and the inteligent, someone who is merely a member of the educated strata. 137

Masaryk had also deplored the division so often made

between mental and manual work. In the Social Contract, he described as "eccentric" the idea that a manual worker only worked in a machine-like way, and did not need to think<sup>138</sup>. Inter-war theorists echoed this complaint; Šalda, for example, wrote:

Intelligence is a quality which is spread throughout mankind, a quality which every so-called manual worker must share. If a ploughman is to plough the land, he often has to exhibit considerable sagacity and ingenuity, as does a cobbler if he is to make a decent pair of shoes to measure... In contrast, there are very many so-called intellectual professions which, in reality, involve no more than... performing a routine... How much true intellect does a police official need to put his papers in order... /or the/ schoolmaster who thrashes out the Latin perfective with his pupils? 139

Nonetheless, the tendency to equate the term "intelligentsia" with those whom the philosopher Emanuel Rádl described as "a class of people who earn their living by virtue of their school diplomas" persisted throughout the inter-war period<sup>140</sup>. Arnošt Bláha, for example, insisted that "for me, an intellectual is not someone who has gone through a series of schools, and assured himself of a certain social position, but rather someone who gives spiritual and moral values precedence over spiritual values"<sup>141</sup>. He spoke of the intelligentsia as being found in "all income brackets, and all types of occupation", but when he came to discuss their psyche and their way of life in his monographic study A Sociology of the Intelligentsia, he tended to identify them as people in white-collar professions, who had achieved a certain basic standard of education<sup>142</sup>. Similarly,

Anton Štefánek claimed that the intelligentsia were people with "a higher intellectual ability" but went on to explain, "we also understand by this term... all educated people..."<sup>143</sup>. There was an obvious desire to picture the intelligentsia as a social group which, "est en dehors des classes, et au-dessus d'elles... Elle représente donc le facteur unifiant de la société"<sup>144</sup>. However, even sociologists did not escape from the habits of colloquial speech, and easily slipped back into the popular usage of the term "intelligentsia" as a synonym for "officials, teachers, priests, doctors, advocates etc"<sup>145</sup>.

There was no attempt to describe a "physical type" for the intelligentsia, as there had been for both the peasantry and the working class<sup>146</sup>. Bláha did discuss briefly their material life-style, drawing on the results of the State Office of Statistics' family budget enquiries to illustrate his points. Thus we learn that "officials" had a superior standard of housing to "workers", a point which Bláha felt reflected not only their higher incomes, but also their social function and the need for "representation"<sup>147</sup>. Officials also had a far healthier diet - "not just the result of more favourable economic conditions... but also the result of a higher level of education... the influence of scientific knowledge, which triumphs over custom"<sup>148</sup>.

Bláha placed far more emphasis on the "socio- psychic" characteristics of the intelligentsia, of which a sense

of social superiority was obviously felt to be one of the most important. They were said to be very conscious of their "better" education and their "better" work, to say nothing of their "better" housing, their "better" clothes and their "better" manners. Moreover, this sense of superiority was conveyed too, albeit unwittingly, by Bláha's own claim that although books, flowers, pictures and musical instruments might be found in the homes of workers and peasants, "this is probably the result of copying the décor of the intelligentsia, rather than arising from their own spiritual needs"<sup>149</sup>. In a similar spirit, he suggested that although clothes had become an "important agent of social equalisation... the intelligent observer does not fail to realise that what matters is not so much what is worn, but how it is worn"<sup>150</sup>.

Bláha discussed in some detail the social origins of the intelligentsia, here identifying them as people who had completed either secondary or higher education. He distinguished a noticeable tendency for the educated to come from intellectual backgrounds themselves, "even though the modern democratic order allows the 'widest social strata' the formal possibility of aspiring to the intellectual professions". He concluded, "It is, of course, understandable that someone who has come from the socio-psychic milieu of the intelligentsia, [and known] their style of life, can more easily adapt to their psychology and [sense of] ethics"<sup>151</sup>. Šalda noted, in a more critical vein:

If you want to become an intellectual, you must pass through certain schools. In order to graduate successfully, you must first have a basic talent for school study, a good memory, diligence, etc., and further you must have some basic economic means, so that you are able to study... Should you take credit for the fact that you were born intelligent, and also not completely poverty-stricken? Is it your fault if you were not born with educational talent, or perhaps with the necessary economic means? 152

Although grammar-school fees could be waived for the children of poor families, it was still a considerable financial burden to put a child through a complete secondary education. As will be shown in a later chapter, social mobility through education was less common in inter-war Czechoslovakia than is sometimes suggested<sup>153</sup>.

The majority of inter-war intellectuals did not share Šalda's basic scepticism about the social merit accruing to the educated individual. Indeed, Bláha claimed that the intelligentsia had considerable faith in the power of education to provide a solution for every conceivable problem and life situation. He believed that each intellectual had a certain "nucleus of faith that the world can be saved by education" and that, in an exaggerated form, this could lead to "Messianism and elitism". The bitter criticisms of the intelligentsia voiced in the programmes of the Tradesmen's and the Agrarian Parties adds emphasis to Bláha's assertion<sup>154</sup>. Moreover, his own writings betray a very clear sense that the intelligentsia were the natural leaders of society<sup>155</sup>.

Discussion of the intelligentsia's social or political role tended to presume a fundamental distinction between

them and the "common people" (lid). Bláha did allow for the existence of a peasant and a working-class intelligentsia, but he considered that most people whose work was of a primarily manual nature, and who had not been educated beyond the level of higher elementary school, belonged to this second social category. In contrast with the intelligentsia, the "common people" were said to be "like a small child":

a social stratum which is passive... those who are led, rather than those who lead, those who listen, rather than those who instruct, the pupils rather than the educators, the employees rather than the employers... 156

The intelligentsia had, therefore, a responsibility and a duty to guide the rest of society and, according to Bláha, must stand "not with the people, but in front of the people and above the people"<sup>157</sup>

## VI Conclusion

The importance of the social divide between the educated and the non-educated is perhaps the most significant factor to emerge from academic writings about Czech and Slovak societies. This distinction did not coincide exactly with the division between manual and non-manual labour which dominated the formulation of social policy; not all those whose work was considered to be of a "higher nature" would have possessed the necessary educational qualifications to be counted amongst the "intelligentsia". Nonetheless, it is clear that most white-collar professionals were felt to be intellectually and socially super-

ior to the "common people".

The latter were subject to intense scrutiny, partly because of their new political power in an age of mass politics and universal suffrage; both the agrarian and the socialist movements were clearly seen as threats to the intelligentsia's traditional role as leaders of the nation<sup>158</sup>. Workers were said to be a divided social group, including a lower stratum of the feckless and undeserving, who were associated with disorder. The peasantry, too, were pictured as an internally divided group, but it was stressed that their sense of belonging to a rural community was, nonetheless, strong. Although the division between town and country may have been weakening under the impact of modernisation, sociologists such as Bláha were still troubled by it. Business and finance were ignored completely, an omission which only serves to strengthen the impression that the intelligentsia (and not least those of their number whose writings are analysed here) had yet to come to terms with the realities of a modern industrial and democratic state.

# NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. For example, Josef Holeček's work on the peasantry is a highly personalised account, and somewhat romanticised: Selství (Prague, 1928).
2. See chapter 5 and chapter 3.
3. See chapter 6, p. 241. For a background study of inter-war Czechoslovak sociology, see Jan Macků, Vybrány kapitoly z dějin československé sociologie (Prague, 1968); Jiřina Šiklová, "K dějinám pražské sociologické školy mezi dvěma světovými válkami" in Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Philosophica et Historica, vol. 4 (1968), p. 13-25; Antonín Vaněk, Přehled dějin české a slovenské sociologie od nejstarších dob až do roku 1945 (Prague, 1981).
4. Emanuel Chalupný, ed., Slovník národohospodářský, sociální a politický, vol. 3 (Prague, 1929), p. 582; Slovenský naučný slovník, vol. 3 (Bratislava, 1932), p. 277.
5. See, for example, Otakar Machotka and Zdeněk Ullrich, Sociologie v moderním životě, směry, organisace, úkoly (Prague, 1928).
6. Theodor Geiger, Die Soziale Schichtung des Deutschen Volkes (Stuttgart, 1932). For a discussion of American sociology, see Marwick, Class..., p. 50-51.
7. Jan Hajda, A Study of Contemporary Czechoslovakia (Chicago, 1955), p. 88-101. See Appendix 1.
8. The same was certainly of France, see Marwick, op. cit., p. 44-49.
9. Bláha never actually studied under Masaryk in Prague, unlike other leading sociologists such as Chalupný, but he was considerably influenced by Masaryk's sociopolitical ideas. In 1925 he founded a political party named after Masaryk's Progressive Party, and proclaimed that "Masaryk is our programme": Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, Zásady pokrokové politiky (Brno, 1926), p. 8. The most important of Masaryk's writings on class are to be found in: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Otázka sociální; základy Marxismu filosofické a sociologické, 5th ed., (Prague, 1946), especially in vol. 1, p. 229-238.
10. For a discussion of the Prague School of Sociology, see Šiklová, "K dějinám...".
11. Jan Mertl, "K otázce společenských tříd." in Naše Doba, xxxiv (1926), p. 26.
12. Ibid., p. 33.
13. Ibid., p. 33 and Jan Mertl, "O společenských třídách a hospodářském myšlení" in Sociální revue, ix (1928), p. 26.



14. Mertl, "K otázce...", p. 93, 95; "O společenských...", p. 306.
15. See chapter 3, especially p.116-119, 113; chapter 2, p.75 ; Nat. Soc. 1931, p. 181, 14.
16. See Ronald Taylor, Literature and Society in Germany, 1918-1945 (Brighton, 1980), p. 128-132, and the novels of Hans Fallada.
17. Karel Galla, Třídy ve společnost a třídní boj (Prague, 1930), p. 3, 11.
18. Ibid., p. 26-28.
19. See chapter 1, p. 39.
20. Galla, op.cit., p. 13.
21. Ladislav Neuman, "Třída, třídní vědomí a třídní boj v sociologii" in Akademie, xxxi (1928), p. 414.
22. See chapter 3, p. 98-99.
23. Galla, op.cit., p. 13.
24. Ibid., p. 9. Galla was later to embrace Marxism, and became one of the leading educational sociologists in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.
25. Ibid., p. 24-25; Mertl "K otázce...", p. 96.
26. Mertl, "K otázce...", p. 98.
27. Galla, op.cit., p. 25.
28. Ibid., p. 25. See also chapter 2, p77- 80 from which it is clear that these legislative benefits were not necessarily granted to those who "stood on the lowest step of the social ladder".
29. As part of a series of articles which was later reprinted as a pamphlet. Zdeněk Ullrich, "Sociální struktura dneška" in Populační, hospodářský, ideový, politický dnešek; staré myšlení a nová společnost (Prague, 1934), p. 30-46.
30. Ibid., p. 43.
31. Op.cit., p. 41.
32. František Fajfr, "Nivelisace dnešní společnosti" in Čin, vi (1934), p. 1011.
33. Zdeněk Ullrich, "Nivelisace dnešní společnosti" in Sociální problémy, iv (1935), p. 61.
34. Idea československého státu, vol. 2, (Prague 1936), p. 413.
35. Galla, op.cit., p. 5.

36. Otakar Machotka, Sociálně-potřebné rodiny v hlavním městě Praze (Prague, 1936), p. 197.
37. Mertl also spoke of "officials" and "workers" as the next two paragraphs will illustrate.
38. Mertl, "K otázce...", p.28-29. See also chapter 6 on the "reality of class".
39. See chapter 3, p. 110-111.
40. Maurice Halbwachs, La classe ouvriere et les niveaux de la vie (Paris, 1913).
41. Mertl, "K otázce...", p. 31-32.
42. See above, p. 133.
43. Mertl, "O společenských...", p. 304.
44. See the entries for Jan Antonín Baťa, Miloš Havel or Joe Hartmann in České biografie (Prague, 1936-1941).
45. Mertl, "K otázce...", p. 30.
46. Ibid., p. 30.
47. Galla, op.cit., p. 10
48. See chapter 2, p. 74-76.
49. Galla, op.cit., p. 10.
50. See chapter 3, p. 111-112.
51. Mertl, "O společenských...", p. 308.
52. Mertl, "K otázce...", p. 34.
53. Anton Štefánek, Základy sociografie Slovenska (Bratislava, 1944), p. 89-90.
54. See chapter 5, p. p. 219-220
55. Mertl, "O společenských...", p. 308.
56. See also the discussions on the intelligentsia in this chapter, p. 163-170.
57. Machotka, Sociálně..., p. 197.
58. See Jiří Kolaja, "Sociological Publications in Czechoslovakia Between 1930 and 1940 as an Object for the Sociology of Knowledge" in Miloslav Rechcigl, ed., The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Knowledge, vol. 2 (The Hague, 1968), p. 1555-1566.
59. Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, Sociologie sedláka a dělníka, 2nd ed., (Prague, 1937), p. 110.

60. See chapter 3 below, p. 100.
61. Miroslav Moudrý, "Sociální posice vesnické ženy" in Věstník České Akademie Zemědělství, xiii (1937), p. 110.
62. Vladimír Clementis, "Agrarizm ako nová "ideologie" " in DAV (1924), p. 39.
63. Josef Holeček, Selství (Prague, 1928), p. 381.
64. Karel Galla, Dolní Roveň: sociologický obraz české vesnice (Prague, 1939), p. 320.
65. Moudrý, "Sociální...", p. 213; Bláha, Sociologie sedláka..., p. 126.
66. Galla, Dolní Roveň..., p. 188.
67. Bláha, Sociologie sedláka..., p. 125.
68. Holeček, Selství..., p. 355.
69. Antonín Obrdlík, "Sociální mobilita jedná z našich venkovských obcí" in Sociologická revue, v (1934), p. 47.
70. Mojmír Hájek, "Jak funguje moravská vesnice v oblasti života kulturního" in Sociologická revue, xi (1940), p. 175.
71. Bláha, Sociologie sedláka..., p. 178.
72. Ibid., p. 118, 149.
73. Bláha, Sociologie sedláka..., p. 143, 146; Štefánek, Základy..., p. 73.
74. Bláha, op.cit., p. 120-122.
75. Ibid., p. 150, 133.
76. Štefánek, op.cit., p. 73.
77. Antonín Paleček, Nové selství; základy ruralismu (Prague, 1933), p. 39.
78. Bláha, op.cit., p. 133, Paleček, op.cit., p. 38.
79. Bláha, op.cit., p. 192.
80. Ibid., p. 190.
81. Op.cit., p. 187-188.
82. Op.cit., p. 192.
83. Štefánek, op.cit., p. 88.

84. Vavro Šrobár, Politický problém Slovenska (Prague, 1926), p. 25; Anton Kompánek, Slovák, jeho povaha vlastnosti a schopnosti (Prague, 1921), p. 14-17.
85. Štefánek, Základy...., p. 62.
86. Hájek, "Jak funguje...", p. 179.
87. Bláha, op.cit., passim; Štefánek, op.cit., p. 70.
88. Holeček, op.cit., p. 375.
89. Bláha, op.cit., p. 190-191.
90. Galla, Dolní Roveně...., p. 366-373.
91. See chapter 3, p. 104.
92. Galla, Třídy...., p. 4.
93. See p.157-158 below.
94. Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, "Vyzkumný ústav dělnický" in Sociologická revue, ii (1931), p. 315.
95. See chapter 3, p. 112-113.
96. See chapter 2, p. 76 for a quotation from Masaryk.
97. Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, "K psychologii dělníka" in Naše Doba, xxxi (1923), p. 12-13.
98. Jan Mertl, "Dělníctvo jako společenská třída" in Sociální revue, x (1929), p. 435.
99. Ibid., p. 431, 437.
100. Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, Sociologie sedláka a dělníka, 2nd ed., (Prague, 1937), p. 30-31.
101. Ibid., p. 31.
102. Op.cit., p. 31-32.
103. Machotka, Sociálně...., p. 24, 19.
104. Ibid., p. 19.
105. Op.cit., p. 176-179, 63.
106. Op.cit., p. 19, 180.
107. See chapter 2, p. 77-79.
108. See chapter 3, p. 113
109. A French translation was used; Alfredo Niceforo, Les classes pauvres (Paris, n.d.).
110. Mertl, "Dělníctvo...", p. 430-431.

111. Ibid., p. 431.
112. Bláha, op.cit.. p. 37, 40.
113. Ibid., p. 41, 55-57.
114. Op.cit., 72, 79; Mertl, "Dělníctvo...", p. 436.
115. Jaroslav Hanáček, "K otázce dělníkova sociálního sebevědomí" in Sociologická revue, xii (1946), p. 24-35. The publication of this survey, which was undertaken in the late 1930s, was originally intended for 1941, but the journal was closed down by the Nazis. Eventual publication came in 1946, and this led to misinterpretation in Jan Hájda's study of Czech society, as Hájda claimed that Hanáček's study depicted the effect of the Second World War on working-class mentality Hájda, A Study..., p. 111-112.
116. Mertl, "Dělníctvo...", p.436.
117. Hanáček, op.cit., p. 44-45. It would appear that workers involved in the Čmladina movement in the late nineteenth century had indeed worn distinctive clothes, including wide black hats; see Olga Skalníková, "Národopisný obraz života kladenských horníků koncem 19 a na počátku 20 století" in Kladensko: život a kultura lidu v průmyslové oblasti (Prague, 1959), p. 74.
118. Bláha, op.cit., p. 75.
119. Ibid., p. 77-78.
120. Hanáček, op.cit., p. 45.
121. Bláha, op.cit., p. 46.
122. Hanáček, op.cit., p. 43.
123. The worker of early capitalist times was said to have spent his free time, such as it was, on the streets and in the pubs. Hanáček, op.cit., p. 24-25.
124. Bláha, op.cit., p. 74, 79.
125. Hanáček, op.cit., p. 28-29.
126. Mertl, "Dělníctvo...", p. 436.
127. Hanáček, op.cit., p. 30-31.
128. Machotka, op.cit., passim. See also chapter 6, p. 247-248.
129. Bláha, "Vyzkumný ústav...", p. 166.
130. Hanáček, op.cit., p. 34-35.

131. F.X. Šalda, "Krise intelligence" in Šaldův zápisník, iii (1930-1931), p. 344.
132. See Jan Hájda, "The Role of the Intelligentsia in the Development of the [sic] Czechoslovak Society", in Miloslav Rechcigl, ed., The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Culture (The Hague, 1964), p. 307-312; also chapter 5, p.
133. Arnošt Bláha, "Le problème de l'intellectuel" in Revue internationale de sociologie, xliv (1936), p. 361-372.
134. See chapter 1, p. 31-32.
135. Anton Štefánek, Základy..., p. 125.
136. Masaryk, Otázka sociální..., p. 362.
137. Ottův slovník naučný: dodatky, vol. 2, no. 2 1933, p. 1482.
138. Masaryk, op.cit., p. 359.
139. F.X. Šalda, "Intelligence a demokracie" in Var, iii (1924), p. 365.
140. Emanuel Rádl, Krise intelligence (Prague, 1928), p. 7.
141. Quoted in "Glosy a poznámky" in Parlament, v (1926), p. 69.
142. Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, Sociologie intelligence (Prague, 1937); "Funkční typy intelligence" in Naše Doba, xliv (1936), p. 87.
143. Štefánek, op.cit., p. 99.
144. Bláha, "Le problème...", p. 370.
145. Štefánek, op.cit., p. 99.
146. See p. 148-149, 158.
147. Bláha, Sociologie intelligence..., p. 178-182; see also chapter 6, p. 245-247.
148. Bláha, op.cit., p. 186-188; see also chapter 6, p. 239-240.
149. Bláha, op.cit., p. 270-271, 183.
150. Ibid., p. 188-189.
151. Op.cit., p. 168.
152. Šalda, " Intelligence a ...", p. 366.

153. See chapter 6, p. 249-253.
154. Bláha, op.cit., p. 272-273; see also chapter 3, p.
155. Especially "Problém lidu" which was published in Sociologická revue, xi (1940), p. 7-33.
156. Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, Problém lidu (Prague, 1947), p. 8, 38. This is a reprint of the article cited above.
157. Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, K psychologie doby (Prague, 1922), p. 87.
158. c.f. Martin Bulmer's claim that "One of the main stimuli to research on class imagery has undoubtedly been a normative one, the desire to understand the nature and progress of working-class industrial and political action, particularly of a radical kind." : Martin Bulmer, ed., Working-class images of society (London, 1975), p. 4.

## Chapter 5

### Informal perceptions of class, estate and status

#### I Introduction

The most fascinating material for any historical study of this kind is often the unwitting testimony of private individuals, whose informal perceptions of their world sometimes reveal far more than any self-conscious sociological analysis of society, or political polemic about the nature of "class"<sup>1</sup>. In this chapter, the social models presented by the bureaucrats, politicians and sociologists of inter-war Czechoslovakia will, therefore, be given more substance, and sometimes indeed offset, by informal testimony from various groups throughout Czech and Slovak societies. First there will be a discussion of the most common colloquial division of society, which acknowledged two social categories, "gentlemen" and "people". This will endeavour to bring out those status factors which were particularly important in social stratification during this period. Then the four social categories which emerged from the analysis of party political programmes - agriculturalists, small businessmen, officials and workers - will be examined in the light of evidence of an unofficial and informal kind. Finally, an attempt will be made to build up a picture of Society with a capital S, the somewhat elusive upper stratum or perhaps strata of inter-war Czechoslovakia.



The sources used in this chapter are diverse and somewhat fragmentary: memoirs, reports of the testimony of private individuals in sociological surveys, newspaper articles and letters, etiquette manuals and, very occasionally, archive material. An attempt to use a "sample method" in examination of the press - picking out days at regular intervals in order to search a variety of newspapers for any indication of changes in social perceptions over time - proved to be unrewarding. Some of the archives which might have yielded useful material, such as the Ústav marxizmu-leninizmu in Bratislava, which has collections of unpublished workers' reminiscences, were closed to me as a Western scholar. However, I found little of relevance in the archives which I was able to visit, even the National Technical Museum in Prague, which has a large collection of autobiographies collected in the early 1950s. The Czechs and the Slovaks, like the French, did not make a frequent habit of recording self-conscious impressions of the social hierarchy<sup>2</sup>. Published biographies and autobiographies are lacking for many sectors of the community, in part because of the ideological direction which publishing has taken in Czechoslovakia since 1948. Because of these provisos, this chapter cannot hope to give equal treatment to all social groups. It provides, of necessity, a fragmentary and impressionistic record of inter-war society. About its authenticity, no more can be said than that the materials chosen seem to me to exemplify widely-held views.

## II "Gentlemen" and "people"

The stratification model which was most commonly used in colloquial speech by both Czechs and Slovaks acknowledged two main social categories, páni (gentlemen), and lid (common people). The distinction had its roots in the feudal estate system, when Pán was the title given to a member of the nobility. By the twentieth century, however, the concept pán had broadened, and tended to reflect a number of status factors other than birth, although birth was not totally without importance. To belong to the people, lid, implied the lack of one or more of these attributes of status. The similarity between this dichotomous division of society and the social differentiation between the "intelligentsia" and the "people", so common in academic writings, is obvious<sup>3</sup>. However, whilst the latter tended to focus on presumed mental attributes, the former was far more suggestive of social qualities.

In the inter-war years, the factors most indicative of whether someone belonged to the "people", or was, rather, a "gentleman", were his level of education and the possession of a non-manual job, itself often directly dependent on academic qualifications. At this point colloquial usage of the terms "intelligentsia" and "gentlemen" coincide. Replies to a questionnaire issued amongst students at the lectures of the philosopher, J.L. Fischer<sup>at</sup>/ the Vyšší lidová škola in Brno (a rough equivalent would be the W.E.A.) show that the "intelligentsia" were felt to include:

...those with a certificate - probably the maturita or higher - for example, primary-school teachers, officials, secondary-school teachers, members of the free professions, officers, priests, etc.

or, in another version: "those who have graduated from secondary school, at least, and who have a superior material position"<sup>4</sup>. The term "gentleman" could be used in a similar context; references were often made to someone studying to become a "gentleman", for instance. Thus an elderly Slovak man interviewed in 1979, in an ethnographical survey of village education, recalled that his parents had insisted on his leaving school early, because "we have two children, and if we send you both to be gentlemen, who will do the work at home?"<sup>5</sup> Which ever term was preferred, the implication was clear - secondary education and a white-collar job bestowed social superiority. It is hardly surprising that the Agrarian Party and the Tradesmen's Party, most of whose members did not fulfil these criteria, were so critical of the automatic esteem awarded to the diploma-holding intelligentsia<sup>6</sup>.

Especially in Slovakia, manual labour was felt to be socially degrading; a would-be "gentleman" avoided it at all costs, even in his private life. This was one of the many causes of misunderstanding between the Slovaks and those Czechs sent to work in the province after 1918, since the latter did not always share the same scruples. One Slovak historian recalled, in conversation, a story which he claimed to have come across whilst studying inter-war administrative records. Apparently, a Czech had been

sent to fulfil an important post in East Slovakia, and reports got back to his superiors that he was not behaving as a "gentleman" should. Someone was immediately sent to hold an enquiry - sexual misconduct was suspected. In fact, the man's "crime" was to have washed his own car! This story may be apocryphal, but similar reports do appear in contemporary accounts of Czechs in Slovakia<sup>7</sup>.

Life style and social behaviour were important indicators of a person's status, although, as in the case above, greater demands were often made of a "gentleman" in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands. The Slovaks were still influenced by the mores of the Magyar gentry, and, in their consciousness of the need for social "presentation" and style, far closer than the Czechs to the aristocratic notion of gentility which was prevalent in Britain at this time<sup>8</sup>. There were, for example, shocked encounters when high-ranking Czechs were found to be drinking in dirty, smoky ale-houses, rather than a first-class hotel like the Carlton in Bratislava<sup>9</sup>. Complaints about the Czechs' bad table manners were frequent, and probably justified; the Czechs themselves acknowledged that this was a common social failing, even amongst the highly placed<sup>10</sup>. However, although the Czechs' perceptions of gentlemanly behaviour may often have been less discerning than those of their Slovak counterparts, crude social habits were certainly condemned. A survey undertaken in Moravia in the late 1930s to document those qualities which were popularly perceived as distinguishing a "gentleman", noted the great disapprobation felt towards one

socially-aspiring man who "blows his nose into his hand"<sup>11</sup>.

Birth and wealth were the final attributes which marked out a "gentleman". The Czechs tended to picture themselves as a democratic and egalitarian nation. The importance of birth could be dismissed in a Švehla-like claim: "We have no nobility, we have always been common people"<sup>12</sup>. The "badly-paid official", or the "impoverished intellectual" were common social stereotypes, and the Czechs took a certain pride in the idea that they were a poor people<sup>13</sup>. However, the Moravian survey quoted above suggested that both material standing and family background were, nonetheless, amongst the criteria used by its respondents to place someone socially, and concluded:

It is difficult for a person from a poor background to rise into the 'higher strata', and if he does get there either because he has founded an independent business, or has earned a certain wealth, he is often persistently placed amongst the 'people', simply because of his origins. 14

The Czechs were more ready to admit to a certain social snobbery in Slovakia, than to acknowledge it at home. A series in Přítomnost, entitled "Letters from a small Slovak village", explained to its largely Czech readership:

Birth and wealth are the two stars in the Slovak firmament... Poverty here is a curse. A poor girl does not belong to Society, because she is not from a 'good' family... A badly-off official is not a 'gentleman' - you often hear "that kind of gentleman, who has nothing in his purse; is a nobody. 15

However, the expansion of education in Slovakia after 1918 greatly increased the opportunities of social mobility for those who were neither wealthy nor well-born. At the same time, the Slovaks were exposed to the Czechs' loudly-vaunted democratic ideals. The following extract from the 'problem page' of the Slovak illustrated weekly, Nový svet, from the summer of 1937, reveals the impact of new ideas and circumstances, and the fact that old habits died hard:

To love a poor man is not at all humiliating - not even for a rich girl from a so-called "gentleman's family" (pánske dievča). Or are you suggesting that mutual love is to be the prerogative only of people on the same material level? Spiritual characteristics are more important than wealth. If you are convinced that your young man loves you, and if he is really the person of character whom you describe, there should be no social barrier. It does not matter that he is not your social equal. Today the conventional social barriers which divide people according to their estate no longer exist. Today education is an estate. We recognise the educated and the un-educated, the good-for-nothings and decent people. If you are a sensible young woman, act according to the advice of your heart. 16

The concepts "gentlemen" and "people" will arise again several times in this chapter. It is important to realise that these social categories were far from rigid. Not only were there differences in usage between the Czech Lands and Slovakia, there were also further distinctions between villages and small towns, and large urban centres. In a small community, a successful shopkeeper, or a primary-school teacher, might take on the role of the local "gentleman" - the same was true of England at this time<sup>17</sup>. However, the Bratislava "gentle-

man's daughter", whose romantic plight elicited the advice quoted above, obviously came from a much higher social stratum than this; the city "gentleman" was a more exclusive breed than his country counterpart. Perhaps because the terms lacked rigour, the sense of group identity which they conveyed seems to have helped to militate against the formation of a more specific class consciousness.

### III The agricultural community

The various categories of source material analysed in previous chapters give a clear indication that the agricultural population should be regarded as a separate community. The census, for instance, grouped together all those who worked on the land as a distinct "class"<sup>18</sup>. Whilst some of the political parties preferred the term "estate", they, too, acknowledged that the agricultural population was a group with its own distinct social ethos; even the Communist Party, however reluctantly, admitted to there being an "Agrarian Question"<sup>19</sup>. Sociological writings add to the picture of a group which, despite some internal divisions, had a strong sense of common identity<sup>20</sup>. Informal evidence confirms the impression of separateness; as in France, "not only did the rest of society see the peasants as a class apart, so did the peasants"<sup>21</sup>.

A survey in Lidové noviny, in 1924, which asked readers to explain "Why I like my job", brought a number of

replies from farmers. Pride in profession, and a sense of corporate identity, were expressed in no uncertain terms. One correspondent remarked that "our profession is the first, the oldest and the most fundamental". Another claimed, "We peasants do not learn our trade, we are born to it"<sup>22</sup>. Family tradition was obviously an important factor in the peasant's self-image, as was work on the land, rather than mere ownership of land. Responses to the Lidové noviny survey stressed both of these points:

I am an agriculturalist (zemědělec). Why do I like my job? Because my forebears worked on our soil for more than three hundred years, and cultivated the land which I cultivate today, [working] from morning to night in the eternal struggle with nature and the gravelly land, just as I struggle today. 23

I am a small farmer (maloročník). My ancestors, grandfather and father worked on the inherited soil, and they passed it on to me as a legacy. ...I work for my own child, and I should like to double the holding for him, so that my memory will live on. 24

Relationship to the land was clearly the central feature in a peasant's life, the driving force in his whole psychology. The autobiography of the actor Karel Želenský quoted the following diatribe from a peasant, who felt that village life had been misrepresented in a feuilleton written by the director of the Czech National Theatre:

You can say of a peasant that he cheats, that he is miserly, that he does not give the domestic servants and the cattle enough to eat... he will forgive you all this. But he will not, and cannot forgive you the outrageous claim that he neglects the land. Well, you are of peasant blood yourself, and you know what the land means to us. It is our life, our task, our comfort, and we peasants pray... to the land. 25



The literary style may have been the result of editing, but the strength of the sentiments was clear.

The land dominated the peasant's way of life, and it also defined his social status. The poet Nezval, in his memoirs of a childhood spent in a small Moravian village before the First World War, recalled a village hierarchy in which farm owners (sedláci) were always called "pán", even if they did not look like gentlemen, and in which the lowest place was occupied by landless farm labourers<sup>26</sup>. The continuing use of such occupational titles as chalupník (small-holder), maloročník (small farmer), or statkář (estate owner) suggests that there was still a keen sense of rank, based on the amount of land owned, in the inter-war years<sup>27</sup>.

Agrarian ideology, with its emphasis on the "sacred soil" and its idealisation of the peasant as "the most creative element in the state" undoubtedly mirrored the prejudices of many sectors of the agricultural community<sup>28</sup>. The peasants of Dolní Rožná told Karel Galla that the land was "the economic foundation of everything", and that their work was "the basis of life". A survey undertaken to determine the importance attached to various occupations, elicited similar responses from members of the farming community. The peasant was described as "the original producer" because "food must be provided before the other estates can carry out their occupation"<sup>29</sup>. There was, however, a strong conviction that agriculturalists were not receiving a reward commensurate with

their contribution to the national well-being. Both farmers and agricultural labourers often expressed a sense of grievance because of what they saw as the undeserved advantages of urban life. Karel Galla quoted claims that industrial workers "have big incomes" and "live better than us. They have a strong weapon in the strike and public opinion favours them. They shrink from agricultural work, their own is better paid." There was general agreement that "the townswoman has paradise on earth in comparison to the countrywoman". One agricultural labourer even made the sweeping statement that people in towns "go for walks and amuse themselves. They don't work much, and they live in affluence and luxury"<sup>30</sup>. There was a certain sense of ambiguity in the peasant's self-image, and pride in occupation was offset by a general sense of social disadvantage.

The attitudes of the rest of society to the peasantry were equally complex. Many Czechs in high social positions were proud to boast of their peasant origins, like Josef Lexa, a leading lawyer in the Land Office, who noted:

I come from a small village in South Bohemia, from a family which this year celebrates 300 years of ownership of the family estate... We have been free peasants for at least 520 years. 31

Božena Němcová's novel of peasant life, Babička (Granny) was actually compulsory reading for German army officers, as part of their inculcation in Czech culture<sup>32</sup>. Yet there can be little doubt that white-collar professions stood much higher on the social scale than farming, and

that peasants were sometimes viewed with a certain exasperated disdain. A journalist on Přítomnost, for example, claimed: "The peasantry's immediate concerns end at the village backyards, and it is difficult for their souls to fly beyond this frontier"<sup>33</sup>.

In Slovakia, the social and economic gulf between the peasantry and the town-based intelligentsia was far greater than in the Czech Lands. The farming community tended to be approached by outsiders as something of an unknown quantity. The result could be a terse, shocked description of rural misery, like the following report on the Pohrnice district by Slovak students who were studying in Prague:

Bad living conditions and insufficient and unbalanced diets (potatoes and bread made from barley flour) are the cause of various illnesses ... one of the most prevalent diseases is rickets ... no less common in that district is T.B. Alcoholism is the shadow side of life. 34

On the other hand, the peasantry might be portrayed as romantic, colourful ethnographical specimens. An article in the Slovak women's magazine, Živena, from 1937 suggested:

On a short visit to the village, during an excursion, we only see the beautiful national costumes, which are worn on Sundays, and the people themselves are mistrustful, and often even hide themselves from... photographers... If you can only have a little tact and sincerity, not only the painted doors of the cottages, but also the pure hearts of the inhabitants will be opened for you... [The old grandfather] will talk of brigands and magicians... and you will be carried to times long past. 35

Despite the fragmentary nature of such evidence, informal testimony does suggest that the agricultural population was seen as a distinct entity, and, moreover, that the division between town and country sometimes cut across the class lines envisaged in socialist ideology<sup>36</sup>. The agricultural labourer might vote for a socialist party (an article in Brázda spoke of farmers having to contend with "politically-whipped-up demands"<sup>37</sup>); this did not preclude jealousy of the industrial proletariat. Overall, the impression is of ambivalence, both in the peasant's perceptions of their own place in society, and in the reactions of the rest of society to the peasantry. Traditionally they were regarded as the bearers of Czech and Slovak culture, but their social and economic position often belied the proud boasts made on their behalf.

#### IV Small businessmen

The picture of small entrepreneurs, artisans and shopkeepers, which can be pieced together from the source materials analysed in previous chapters, is far from comprehensive. They were ignored by sociologists, and for the Ministry of Social Welfare, they were simply part of the much wider category of "self-employed"<sup>38</sup>. The živnostenský řád did, however, enumerate in some detail those occupations which were to be considered as "trades", and attempted to foster feelings of professional solidarity through the various trade organisations<sup>39</sup>. The existence of an independent Tradesmen's and Shopkeepers' Party suggests, moreover, that small businessmen had

certain clearly perceived common interests. Yet concern over taxation and fear of competition from big business, which feature large in that party's programme, create no more than the impression of an economically beleaguered group<sup>40</sup>. Informal evidence, sparse though it is, is a little more revealing of the character and status of this social category.

Although the concept of a unified "middle estate", embracing salaried employees and peasant farmers, as well as small businessmen, seems to have been a political creation, the latter were readily identified as a middle group in society<sup>41</sup>. Thus the 'lonely hearts' page of the women's journal List pani a dívek reveals such notices as :

I would like to introduce my relative, aged 24, to a man of true character, with a secure position, aged up to 38. She is a very modest girl, from the middle social strata, and understands both housekeeping and trade. 42

For a manual worker to become a tradesman of some kind was normally seen as a social advance. Although Ilja Marko, who undertook a survey of the Bratislava shantytown of Dornkappel, himself believed that the local shopkeepers "only appear to belong to the higher strata", because most of their property belonged to the bank, the appearance of being self-employed gave them a certain social prestige amongst the rest of the community. One man explained of an acquaintance who had just opened a shop:

I would change places with him at once. I swear to God, if I had a shop like N. has, I wouldn't give it up for anything. And he was only an ord-

inary tailor, and look at him now, how he has got on! Why shouldn't I open a shop for brick-laying equipment? Then I wouldn't have to run to anyone for work. We would live like gentlemen. 43

The social position of small businessmen was not, however, necessarily secure. The shoe magnate, Tomáš Baťa, recalling his youth in the 1890s, explained:

When I became apprenticed to my father after primary school, it was clear to me that society was divided into two kinds.- into gentlemen and non-gentlemen. Those who went on to study at secondary school were young gentlemen, whilst those who became apprentices were condemned to be non-gentlemen for ever. 44

Forty years later, a survey investigating social prestige in a small Moravian town revealed surprisingly similar attitudes. Small businessmen who aspired to be regarded as "gentlemen" exaggerated their level of education; they also disassociated themselves from the stigma of manual work. Thus a tailor claimed that his assistant did the actual sewing, and any menial tasks such as mending old clothes, whilst he himself only drafted patterns. Apparently, at a certain point in the social hierarchy, the title mistr, which implied a master-craftsman, ceased to be a compliment, and became, if anything, an insult<sup>45</sup>.

Small tradesmen were often financially insecure, especially in the Depression of the early 1930s. A Slovak wheelwright wrote to the Communist journal DAV, in 1931:

As a small craftsman, I have worked for the whole year in the hope that my work... would be rewarded humanely by my fellow citizens at

the fair at Brezno. The dreadful economic crisis meant that we did not sell our products... The small craftsmen's estate in Slovakia, and I think elsewhere, too, is not allowed either to live or to die. We can only exist, and think about our poverty and debts by day and night. 46

It was not until 1935 that self-employed entrepreneurs who went out of business were allowed to receive even the most minimal unemployment pay<sup>47</sup>. Small businessmen were not covered by old-age and invalidity insurance, either. When it was first proposed that manual workers should be granted pension insurance, the Chamber of Commerce in České Budějovice had protested:

Why should home-workers be granted the advantages of insurance... and why should other tradesmen... who often do not earn as much as their own skilled workers, be excluded? ...tradesmen face just the same dangers as labour... There should be insurance for tradesmen, and all the weaker strata of the nation. 48

This complaint of poverty was perhaps exaggerated, but it did convey a sense of the hardship faced by some small businessmen.

Economic discontent amongst businessmen sometimes tended to become ritualised. Karel Poláček, an author noted for his ironic portrayal of small-town life, remarked somewhat cynically: "Of course a business cannot flourish, for the politically-aware businessman is groaning under the weight of unbearable taxes"<sup>49</sup>. Needless to say, many businesses did prosper, and their owners were accepted as pillars of the local community, members of the městská honorace (lit. town notables). The Lidové noviny survey "Why I like my job" found several willing contributors

amongst the ranks of small businessmen, and responses gave the impression of pride in solid family concerns:

I honour my profession, indeed, it is only natural, since my father, my grandfather and my ancestors even further back were all millers... God grant that my descendants will be millers too... I am proud of my miller's estate. 50

Overall, the suggestion is, however, of a group who, like the peasantry, were often dissatisfied with their social position. At the end of the 1930s, Jan Antonín Baťa criticised the Czechoslovak educational system for preparing students "for service in the savings banks and the administration. This was necessary during the past development of our nation... but an independent nation needs entrepreneurs"<sup>51</sup>. Small businessmen might be portrayed as the "backbone of the nation", but in practice social prestige was more readily granted to people who had successfully completed their formal education and won a salaried post.

#### V Salaried employees

The social category "officials, teachers and lower-ranking non-manual employees" zřizenci ", recognised in the political programmes of the National Democratic Party and the Populist Party, was particularly heterogeneous<sup>52</sup>. Its members were to be distinguished primarily by the non-manual nature of their work - in the terminology of social insurance legislation, they were employed in "higher service"<sup>53</sup>. Yet the census distinguished very clearly bet-



ween zřizenci (clerks, technicians, shop assistants and foremen) and úředníci (under which heading were grouped teachers, priests and army officers as well as officials)<sup>54</sup>. Sociologists were more concerned to define the characteristics of an "intelligentsia", than to analyse the white-collar professions as such. Although they sought to picture this "intelligentsia" as a group which stood above class and profession, they did acknowledge that the term was applied colloquially to people in jobs which required at least a secondary education - in other words, to officials and those of a similar standing, but not necessarily to zřizenci<sup>55</sup>. On the other hand, the socialist parties considered that most salaried employees, whatever their rank, belonged economically to a wider proletariat<sup>56</sup>. This picture of overlapping group loyalties is mirrored by informal evidence; there was a certain rhetorical sense of belonging to the same social stratum, yet in practice salaried employees were very aware of their specific occupational group.

The social importance of the division between manual and non-manual labour should not be underestimated. The proposal that manual workers should be granted old-age and invalidity pensions, and that there should be a unified system of social insurance, brought much hostile reaction from white-collar employees. The latter obviously felt that any blurring of the distinction between themselves and manual workers was a threat to their social prestige. The committee set up to implement the proposed reforms was inundated with letters and petitions

which sought to emphasise the distinct character and needs of employees in "higher service". The following protest from the six main Czech and Slovak organisations representing white-collar employees gives a clear picture of their members' self-image, as well as mounting a political attack on the Social Democratic Party:

The proposal of Deputy Johanis and his comrades, because of its excellent lack of clarity, is obviously directed towards the end that all social insurance... should be brought together under the control of the Social Democratic Party.

Without regard to the political tendency of Mr. Johanis's proposal, it is materially impossible, and socially highly unjust, to amalgamate the insurance of manual workers... on one basis, and under the same conditions as the social insurance of mental workers. [The latter], in the given case, are to be understood as trade assistants and officials in the private sector, one mutually-recruited and complementary closed estate. It is closed, not in a class sense, but simply as a result of its material needs, and its creative mission in the economic and cultural life of the state, and of human society. Even allowing for the utmost democracy, the members of our estate have different living conditions to workers, in the same way, as is best shown in practice, that workers' leaders have different living conditions to true workers. 57

A petition from the trades union representing officials and zřizenci employed by iron mines and foundries made a similar claim:

Legislators should also devote their attentions to social questions concerning officials and zřizenci, and especially those [employed] in the private sector. They should take into account the fact that these officials and zřizenci have different living conditions from manual workers, they are more mature (sic) and more ready for social insurance, and they can maintain a superior kind of insurance. The concept of invalidity is, for them, much narrower than for manual workers... Their death rate is lower than that of manual workers. They are protected by a longer period of notice against loss of employment and of salary. They are less interested in cash

benefits for sickness, therefore, than in excellent medical care... and convalescence in sanatoria, spas and health resorts. 58

It is clear from the above documents just how readily the distinction between manual and non-manual labour made in social and employment legislation was accepted as natural and fitting by those who benefited from it.

Within the ranks of non-manual workers there were many internal divisions. Their main non-political trades union federation Odborové ústředí "Československý svaz úřednických a zřízeneckých organisace" was perennially concerned about the degree of disunity amongst its members. In 1922, for example, an official history of the organisation noted:

A typical characteristic of Czech officials and zřizenci is their separatism, and the particularism which arises from it. Our problem is to banish separatism from our organisations, to convince the individual components that it is necessary to subordinate their narrow and purely occupational [interests] to the interests of our whole estate. 59

Fifteen years later, in the autumn of 1937, the Federation's working programme repeated this complaint:

It is well-known how complicated divisions amongst officials are... We have separate groups... according to whether we are in the public, or the private, sector... We have further groups according to our level of education and our own particular professional specialisation... There are far too many groups! 60

Perhaps the most fundamental division was between officials and zřizenci. The social position of the latter was

somewhat anomalous. The Social Insurance Acts of 1924 and 1929 had given an institutional basis to their sense of superiority over manual workers, and during preparations for the 1930 census various of their organisations had successfully petitioned the State Office of Statistics for them to be granted a separate census category<sup>61</sup>. However, in the ubiquitous division between páni and lid, they would normally be considered to belong to the "common people", either because of their lack of secondary education, or some other social shortcoming<sup>62</sup>. There was also considerable professional particularism amongst higher-ranking salaried employees. The universal use of professional titles such as "Mr engineer" or "Mr draughtsman" was indicative of the close connection between someone's specific occupation and his social standing. Even within one profession, the minutiae of rank were carefully observed. In 1932, it was reported that officials at the Živnostenská banka had petitioned the management to allow those who had reached the seventeenth wage grade to call themselves "chief official" - apparently this would "facilitate their social life"<sup>63</sup>. Such rank consciousness might be expected to weaken the sense of belonging to one class or "estate".

Amongst the characteristics commonly ascribed to salaried employees, the most often repeated was the claim of poverty. In 1930, for example, the National Socialist daily newspaper, České slovo, published a letter from a low-placed clerk in the state finance department. In it he detailed his family's monthly budget, which left him with

fifteen crowns, out of a monthly salary of 875 crowns, with which to meet any unplanned expenses. The newspaper commented:

It is amazing how these people live when they have no opportunity to supplement their earnings, and when, indeed, other part-time employment is forbidden to them. It is indeed true that the working masses do not live any better, the earnings of most working-class breadwinners do not even reach the level of this salaried employee. Can we allow the widest strata of the nation to be proletarianised to hopelessness? 64

Outside the pages of the Marxist press, interest was almost invariably focused on the impecunious official. Before the major salary revision for state employees of 1926 it was often claimed that officials "live below the level of manual workers, to say nothing of shopkeepers and artisans"<sup>65</sup>. It fell to Communist journals, like Tvorba, to point out how great was the difference in earnings and standard of living between a high-ranking state employee and a manual worker<sup>66</sup>.

At the congress of the Social Democratic trades union federation, one month before Czechoslovak independence was declared, a spokesman for the officials' journal Úřednické Rozhledy claimed:

The war... has levelled out the social differences between officials and workers, and today these differences are so small that they cannot be taken into consideration, and for the most part have disappeared altogether. 67

The suggestion of social levelling was, however, never really born out in the inter-war years. The distinction between manual and non-manual labour remained a crucial

social divide. There might be a degree of political identification between some salaried employees and manual workers, and certainly the group was internally divided by a strong sense of hierarchy and occupational identity. Yet the constant preoccupation with earning and official status showed how jealous non-manual employees were of their social standing. It could almost be said that the only real cohesive feature of this group was its collective determination to maintain the superior position of non-manual over manual work. This is one of the essential aspects of social attitudes in inter-war Czechoslovakia.

## VI Manual workers

Manual workers appear as a distinct social category in all the various types of source material analysed in previous chapters. As this evidence is pieced together, it becomes clear that labour was not perceived as a monolithic whole. The notion that there existed both a higher stratum of skilled workers, who had risen above the general social and economic level of the working class, and a Lumpenproletariat of some kind, which had fallen below this level, was a common feature of sociological studies<sup>68</sup>. It was given a certain substance, too, by the provisions of social legislation. Not only were foremen afforded the status of employees "in higher service", and superior social benefits, but also unskilled and seasonal workers sometimes received less extensive protection than the rest of the working class<sup>69</sup>. Political parties, in their ideological statements, were often more concerned to

suggest a distinction between agricultural labourers and the industrial proletariat than to discuss horizontal divisions within the working class<sup>70</sup>. Nonetheless, whatever the putative divisions and distinctions within labour, it is evident that manual workers were felt to share a certain common social identity, and even non-Marxist theorists sometimes spoke of them as a class<sup>71</sup>.

Informal evidence adds to the complexity of this picture. The word (dělník) manual worker was often used by all sectors of society to conjure up a social stereotype. However, the "worker" might be a political activist or, on the other hand, apathetic and even fatalistic about his situation. He could be a highly-skilled employee of Škoda in Plzeň, or a first generation Bratislavčan - an ex-farm labourer who now worked intermittently as a navvy. Moreover, cutting across explicit class barriers were the more nebulous categories of "gentlemen" and "people", which did not necessarily correspond exactly to any one occupational group.

In so far as inter-war Czechoslovakia had an official stance towards social stratification, this was to stress the equality, moral if not economic, of all types of occupation. In the Czech Lands, in particular, consciously-articulated comments about the manual worker's role in society often reflected such Masarykian philosophy. A survey was undertaken in the mid-1930s to ascertain popular attitudes to the social importance of various occupations - amongst them manual worker, without distinc-

tion of trade. This elicited such replies as the following, from a judge:

I agree with what our great President said in his address to schoolchildren of 28 October 1928: We are all called upon to work, each in his own place and according to his own talents. Society needs all kinds of workers - there must be a sensible division of labour - but all who work diligently are equal in their work. A good manual worker is no less worthy than a good president. 72

Many workers responded to the survey in a similar way. However, the following quotation, from a locksmith's assistant, shows an underlying awareness that certain occupations, even though crucial for society, were in practice regarded as menial and degrading:

Every occupation has its own importance, and is necessary for the welfare of society. If you say, of a street-sweeper, or a sewer-cleaner, "We don't need this man", and the town is not swept or cleaned, you will quickly appreciate the importance even of such a person. The streets will be full of dirt and rubbish, infectious diseases will be rife, and no science, no doctor on Earth, will be able to overcome them. And eventually you will call again for the sweeper and the cleaner... So even such people are necessary for society. 73

Whatever the value for society of manual labour, it was certainly not accorded equal treatment with non-manual work in social and employment legislation. The salaried employees whose petitions to the Ministry of Social Welfare were quoted earlier in this chapter were very sure that the "creative" nature of their jobs entitled them to superior status, "even allowing for the utmost democracy"<sup>74</sup>.

It is clear from the proceedings of inter-war Social Democratic trades union congresses, for example, that the manual workers amongst the delegates resented what they



saw as an automatic and unjustified assumption of superiority on the part of salaried employees. They accused officials of being "apathetic and often downright hostile to the cause of organised labour", and complained "you have to have something extra in comparison to us; why should you have different laws?"<sup>75</sup>

There are suggestions that some salaried employees and professional people held on jealously to any status attributes which distinguished them from labour. The following quotation is taken from a letter to the Agrarian journal, Brázda, in which a certain Mr Jarý complained about people who sought to live above their station:

Our [servant] Marie, for example, will only peel potatoes wearing gloves, so as not to spoil her hands. When she goes shopping she has to wear a hat, and she only has stockings from good silk. At the same time, her poor parents in Slovakia beg pathetically for help every week. And the girl, apart from a fine blouse, and a spare one in her case, has no other linen. However, if she goes to the cinema on Sunday, she wears a coat with a fur collar, expensive pigskin gloves, a wristwatch and extravagant shoes. Moreover, she tells her mistress, herself a fashion-conscious young lady, that she would not wear Pata shoes.

Yes, and her Věna, a chauffeur of the kind who earns 150 crowns a week, will only buy cinema tickets at 12 crowns or more. When they sit in cheaper seats, they claim that the picture is blurred. Even if we have a lot of social feeling, something must be wrong here, for we know what these people's incomes are. And this is one of the thousands of cases from what we might call the naive stratum of serving maids and workers, who wish to feel, once a week, that they are gentlemen. 76

Apart from its overwhelming sense of snobbery and offended social pride, the letter highlights some of the factors which might normally be expected to distinguish a "lady" from a serving girl - the wearing of a hat and silk stock-

ings, for example, and hand-made shoes, rather than mass-produced baťovky. Its defensive tone, in referring to the writer's "social feeling", was typical of a state where official ideology stressed that "a good worker is no less worthy than a good president"<sup>77</sup>. Instinctive rank consciousness often clashed with the egalitarian philosophy which educated Czechs felt that they ought to profess.

Workers' consciousness of their place in society was often expressed in terms of "gentlemen" and "people" - categories which were usually somewhat nebulously defined. The wife of a skilled worker in Moravia, for example, knew that "gentlemen do not eat the left-overs from lunch at dinner-time"<sup>78</sup>. Underlying such comments, one can detect a note of social and economic inferiority. However, mention of "class", or of the "proletariat", or of "capitalists" was limited to the politically aware. Revolutionary statements were sometimes voiced, and the Communists seem to have been correct in their assessment that the most fertile field for recruitment was amongst the unskilled and the unemployed<sup>79</sup>. Members of the Brno unemployed, questioned at the height of the Depression in 1933, blamed their plight on "capitalist anarchy in production" and "the private-ownership capitalist order", whilst an unemployed man in Prague wrote of his life in the doss-house in terms of the retribution to come:

In the morning I got up, tired and broken, as if I had not slept at all. Immediately I opened my eyes in the morning, I heard commands..Someone shouted "To the kitchen for soup", someone else "Coffee!" The coffee, with some bread, cost one crown. There was

enough, but even a dog wouldn't have wanted it. But for us, the unemployed, who had not eaten for a long time, it was good enough...

This was the way we began our mornings - yes, we are only proletarians. Other people get up at 9 o'clock, bathe and go for a walk. They get a tasty breakfast, whatever they want... But one day all this will end. 80

In Slovakia, levels of political consciousness were particularly low. Neither a proper party system, nor universal suffrage, had existed until after independence, and even then politics were still tinged with the corruption of Magyar times<sup>81</sup>. An apparent political commitment might disguise simply a frantic search for food and a job. A worker questioned in a survey of the Bratislava shanty-town of Dornkappel gave the following rambling account of his political fortunes:

I came to the town in 1930. When I was at home, I was a Communist. However, I saw I couldn't get very far with that. I thought, "I will join the Agrarians". But then, devil take it, I had to move here. I lived here for a whole year, but had no luck with work. Then a friend said to me "Hey, Janko, why don't you join the Democrats?" I asked him which Democrats. The National Democrats, he said. So I did, I worked for a week. The foreman was a chap from Moravia, he spoke to me and told me to push lime in a wheelbarrow. I didn't understand him, so on Saturday I was out. And then I got another job through the National Democrats. Then I looked for work for myself. A foreman on a building site in Krizova Street asked me "Which party do you belong to?". "I don't" I replied. So he said "Go up there and join the Christian Socialists". He gave me the address and I joined. I paid three months' membership, and worked for two months. But I didn't get any more work from the Christians. Then a friend came and told me that some rotten democrat was organising a fascist party. He said that some rich man was giving money for it, and there would be work. I joined, but there was no work. Then I took my carcase off to the Czech National Socialists, but on the way I met a friend and told him where I was going. He took me to the Social Democrats, but because I was Hungarian, the Slovaks sent me to the Hungarians. There were a lot of people there,

and less work. I thought about it, and when I knew the town better, I went to the Czech Socialists. Today I am organised with them, and I get work. 82

The story was doubtless exaggerated, but it does show the limitations of seeking to interpret class in terms of political allegiance. This worker was conscious, above all else, of his own precarious economic situation, and political commitment was a luxury which he could not afford. Similarly, there was an acute sense of class grievance when a Slovak worker, hearing his fellows in a political demonstration shout "Down with the capitalists" (Dole s kapitalistami), and not knowing what capitalist meant, resorted to "Down with cabbage leaves" (Dole s kapusti listiami), because he knew that, in the paradise to come, he too would eat meat<sup>83</sup>.

In the Czech Lands there was a far greater level of political consciousness and, indeed, of articulate class awareness. However, the sentiments of self-respect, pride in work well done, and quiet nationalism, which were often expressed, tended to promote political and social stability. The 1924 survey "Why I like my job" obviously encouraged respondents to express positive emotions towards their particular occupation. However, it is clear from workers' contributions that many identified whole-heartedly with the image of the "little Czech man" who was the backbone of the nation.

I love my job...because an engine driver in an express train can reduce enormous distances to a matter of a few hours' journey, whilst in a goods train he can import commodities which everyone needs... The lives of hundreds of people and goods worth millions of crowns are ent-

trusted to his care. Without engine drivers, today's world would not exist. Without engine drivers, perhaps even our President and his colleagues could not have crossed those enormous distances and persuaded the Allied statesmen that our independence was both necessary and just. 84

A stoker even claimed, in terms reminiscent of Masarykian philosophy:

When I was younger, I longed to rise in the world; now I understand things differently. It isn't necessary to be great and famous, but simply to work well so that everyone will be satisfied with me. I am able to look anyone in the eye, because I know that I am a usefully member of society. 85

Within the ranks of labour, it is clear that many divisions and distinctions were perceived. Some workers had more privileges than the rest of labour; social and employment legislation had, for instance, marked out miners for special treatment<sup>86</sup>. The following responses to the Lidové noviny survey suggest that miners did have a particularly strong sense of separate identity, based on historic guild traditions:

I work in the Příbram mines, where employment is passed on from father to son... My grandfather and my uncles lost their lives here in the struggle for their daily bread, and I was taken into employment during my father's lifetime. I feel a great sense of estate pride in avowing my membership of that great army of black people... Who sacrifice their lives for their daily bread, and for the good of society. We form an army which is engaged every day in a life or death struggle. 87

From my youth, I have been a member of the miners' estate. My job pleases me because it demands courage, dauntlessness and resolve... A miner must have a strong and firm character... We have our ancient emblem of estate, a pick and a hammer on a black and gold background. The first colour signifies darkness, and the second that we shall return to the surface safely. 88

Other categories of worker seem to have felt themselves to be particularly underprivileged; domestic servants are one example. Amongst the replies to the Lidové noviny survey was one from a servant who, whilst commenting "I consider housework to be the healthiest and most suitable employment for a girl", asked somewhat plaintively "But why is it not possible for our employers to treat us a bit more like human beings?"<sup>89</sup>.

A letter to the women's journal, List paní a dívek, written in 1927, described the old insecurities of working-class life before the Social Insurance Act came into operation:

What were the prospects for a serving-maid who was getting old? The poorhouse, or begging. That is why we have always been so anxious to get old-age, and invalidity pensions - so that, eventually, after a lifetime's work, we should not be dependent on poor relief in our old age... Every socially-aware person knows... that social insurance is the best way to prevent begging, and to preserve the self-pride of the older worker. 90

Yet it is clear from the sources that social insurance provisions did not meet the existential needs of all members of Czech and Slovak societies, and some people continued to live in conditions of extreme degradation. Despite desperate attempts to maintain their respectability, many of the unemployed interviewed in Brno in 1933 seem to have been sucked down into a kind of under-class - reporting, for example, that poverty had driven their wives to prostitution<sup>91</sup>. A social worker, who wrote an article about her clients for the journal Přítomnost, in 1926, described scenes of great destitution in the working class suburbs of Prague:

A small cellar room, with one window - a seven-member family. The father has only one leg, he lost the other at the factory. The mother is consumptive. A month ago her third child died of T.B. Now her son is dying. The family lives from what the children get from begging.

A ten-member family, eight children, one room, or rather damp cellar. The whole family sews slippers from old coats and clothes bought from a second-hand dealer. Even the youngest, a four-year old girl, has to help. They usually sew seven pairs a day, and when they sell them, which isn't every day, they earn two crowns for each pair. That is fourteen crowns a day for a ten-member family. Not all the children go to school, because they have only got two pairs of shoes between them. 92

No one category of people can be identified here. Karel Čapek, who wrote several feuilletons about the Prague poor, warned against the use of the word "class" - "Poor people are not a class, they are outside class, discarded and unorganised"<sup>93</sup>. It is, however, clear that some members of the unemployed, and certain unskilled and casual labourers, had a level of economic and social culture far below that of the working class as such.

It is clear that the distinction between manual and non-manual labour was a crucial social division in both Czech and Slovak societies. Workers did not necessarily express an explicit awareness of belonging to a working class; they may rather have been conscious of not being "gentlemen", or of belonging to a particular occupation, or they may have seen economic hardship as the focal point of their identity. There were great differences between the Czech Lands and Slovakia, and between the skilled and the unskilled, some of whom perhaps belonged to an 'underclass'.

even though Čapek disputed the term. Some revolutionary sentiment was present, especially amongst the desperate, but it was more than offset by the many who felt themselves to be part of a wider community, and sought to solve their grievances within the system.

## VII An upper stratum?

The lack of any clear picture of an upper stratum, or strata, in society is a noticeable feature of the various categories of source material analysed in the preceding chapters. Official agencies, such as the State Office of Statistics, or the Ministry of Social Welfare, concentrated their attentions on the needs of social policy and employment legislation; the definition of manual and non-manual work, and the distinction between the self-employed and the employee, were of critical importance to them, the delimitation of an upper bourgeoisie of wealth was not seen as their concern<sup>94</sup>. Political party programmes were directed at the needs of the ordinary voter - the worker, the minor bureaucrat, the small businessman or the peasant farmer. In an age of universal suffrage, parties needed to have a mass appeal, and mention of some kind of upper stratum was limited to ritual attacks on capital<sup>95</sup>. Sociologists' main interest was to understand the "common people", the numerically-strong working class and peasantry, and to define their own role, as members of the intelligentsia, in a democratic state<sup>96</sup>. Nowhere was the demarcation and description of the upper reaches of society attempted in more than a half-hearted way. The examination of informal accounts of Czech and Slovak soc-



iety suggests, however, that one reason why the upper stratum was ignored was that observers were not fully convinced of its existence.

In a state whose constituent provinces had once formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there was a very clear conception of what constituted "true" Society. The Habsburg court provided a striking example - a world in which Countess Sophie Chotková had been forced to contract a morganatic marriage with the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, because she did not belong to one of the twenty families of ebenbürtig, and only fabulously wealthy businessmen and financiers, like the Rothschilds, managed to penetrate the inner circle<sup>97</sup>. In the inter-war years, a social model might be sought more appropriately in the England of King George V, but it was Habsburg-style exclusivity which was pictured, in order to make the most effective contrast with Czechoslovak "democracy". Thus, in 1924, an article in Přítomnost compared Prague Society to that of England, "where the passport to Society lies in an ancestry from the fifteenth century, or £100,000 a year", and concluded that there was "an insuperable barrier against the formation of a Society in the Western sense" in Czechoslovakia<sup>98</sup>. It did not really matter whether the picture of English Society was accurate, but it was important to stress that no Czech, or for that matter Slovak, could fulfil such criteria of wealth and birth.

Both the Czechs and the Slovaks had virtually no native aristocracy. In Slovakia, the high nobility had been

exclusively Magyar, and most had returned to Hungary after Czechoslovak independence. The Slovaks did have a gentry, or zemianstvo, of native origin, although the vast majority had Magyarised in the nineteenth century. The zeměni might still be conscious of their status (the poet, Ján Smrek, recalled in his autobiography his early love for a "beautiful university Gretel type", who remained unimpressed by a poem which he wrote for her, and preferred to mix with students "with a gentry name"), but most were poor enough to deserve the nickname given to them in Transleithania of "seven plum-tree" gentry<sup>99</sup>. In the Czech Lands, a few families from the high nobility did identify with the Czech national cause. However, their numbers were sufficiently small to allow the Agrarian Prime Minister, Antonín Švehla, to claim "We do not have a nobility, we have always been simply common people"<sup>100</sup>. The attitude of most aristocrats was epitomised by Prince Alfons Clary's remark:

I had been an Austrian, and remained one, even though the vast many-faceted native country no longer existed. I was only now becoming a Bohemian - the term "Sudeten German" began to be used... 101

Stripped of noble rank in 1918, and of part of their property by the land reform of the following year, they identified with the Sudeten cause, and held aloof from Czech society. Although for foreign diplomats who have left memoirs of this period, the German aristocracy did to a great extent constitute "high society" in Czechoslovakia, for most Czechs and Slovaks, they were a world apart<sup>102</sup>.

Not only did Czech and Slovak society lack an aristocracy, contemporary commentators also noted, "We have very few rich people in our Republic"<sup>103</sup>. Josef Holeček, well-known for his defence of traditional Czech virtues, claimed that there had been no Czech millionaires before the First World War. Although he admitted that many had since emerged (he was writing in the mid-1920s), he blamed this on inflation, and described them as no more than "small capitalists". Holeček never explained just what he meant by millionaire; the Czechs often showed some confusion in their use of this potentially emotive term<sup>104</sup>. It was certainly true that no Czech could rival the fortunes of the great Viennese bankers; even the Petscheks, the wealthiest of the German-Jewish banking families in Bohemia, owned only a fraction of the capital which the Rothschilds could command<sup>105</sup>. However, a survey of property undertaken in 1919 revealed that over 3000 people in Czechoslovakia owned property valued at more than one million crowns<sup>+</sup>, and there were undoubtedly many wealthy Czech businessmen, even before independence<sup>106</sup>. Nonetheless, Holeček was intent on proving that the evils of capital were a foreign phenomenon, and he went on to define a capitalist in terms which freed the Czechs, let alone the Slovaks, from any suggestion that their businessmen and financiers deserved such a title:

Someone can only truly be called a capitalist when he has so much capital that it is indestructible. Cut off his hands, both his legs, behead him, disembowel him, and still he will live. The limbs which were cut off will grow again... The capitalist is he who cannot be impoverished, whatever happens. 107

+ approximately £7,200.

Otto Knap expressed a common view of Czech society in a speech at the jubilee meeting of the International Rotary Club in 1928:

There are only very small /social differences/ between the propertied and the unpropertied, between workers and the owners of capital... This is an enormous plus, which has its roots in the historic development of our state.

It can be shown that these contradictions are truly less than elsewhere, if we choose at random any member of the Czech bourgeoisie. Every one of these men, two or three generations back, is the son, or grandson, of a teacher, a farmer or an official - in short, a "little man". 108

It is clear, however, that a nascent upper stratum was emerging in the inter-war period. The politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, landowners, army officers and people active in the Arts, who had entries in the various biographical dictionaries of this time, could hardly themselves be described as "little men". Indeed, the form filled in by those people whose personal details were recorded in the most comprehensive "Who's Who", the Cultural Directory of the Czechoslovak Republic, included an enquiry about whether they came from a "notable family" - an obvious suggestion of dynasties in the making<sup>109</sup>.

One indicator not to be scorned as a source of prevalent social perceptions is the "lonely hearts" columns of the popular press. The adventurer responsible for the following advertisement obviously believed in the existence of some kind of elite social group:

A handsome, elegant and rich young man would like to make the acquaintance of a sweet, pretty young girl, from the highest social circles, aged up to 20. Offers, with a photograph, to "Honest 50523" 110

The "Fatum" introduction agency regularly advertised in terms which played on the traditional dream of readers of women's magazines - the advantageous marriage:

We vouch for marriage! Many wealthy gentlemen-factory owners and large estate owners, and others with a secure position, such as officials, doctors, engineers, officers. etc., wish to be happily married. We will convey details discreetly, by return of post, to ladies, even those without property. 111

It is noticeable that, amongst the "gentlemen" who were offered as marriage partners, the wealthy self-employed businessmen and landowners had precedence over professional men as desirable husbands.

Despite Holeček's attempt to disassociate the Czechs from "capital", certain sectors of society were undoubtedly marked out by their wealth and affluent life-styles.

Unfortunately, there is no available study of life amongst the Czech economic bourgeoisie<sup>112</sup>. However, the American Ambassador, Lewis Einstein, noted in his memoirs that their "pattern of life was shaped after that of the aristocracy. Many of them owned castles..."<sup>113</sup>. This was true, for example, of the Bartoň-Dobeníns, textile barons who owned two castles, and collected works of art<sup>114</sup>. There are occasional indicators of the status factors of wealth, such as the social hierarchy of cars, given in the memoirs of the psychiatrist, Vladimír Vondráček. At the bottom of the social scale came Fords, and then:

somewhat "better" in the social sense were Chevrolets... Even "better" were Chryslers and Studebakers, above them were Nashes. Cadillacs and

Lincolns were considered to be the "best" American cars...

Apparently the owner of the cinema Adria in Prague owned a Rolls Royce<sup>115</sup>. (The higher ranks of society were often called "better people", lepší lidi, which perhaps explains Vondráček's use of inverted commas, which has been reproduced here.)

An article on family budgets in the Slovak women's magazine Živena explained: "We have so few rich people who don't have to worry about the amount they spend to keep their families... that we can leave them totally out of the discussion"<sup>116</sup>. Statistics illustrating the distribution of incomes confirm that Slovakia had far fewer millionaires (in terms of crowns) than the Czech Lands<sup>117</sup>. Nonetheless, the higher ranks of Bratislava society were sufficiently affluent to <sup>be able</sup> worry about social niceties. An article in the Communist journal DAV suggested the kind of lifestyle where family budgets were hardly a major preoccupation:

On Saturday we went to the ball. It was superb. I had a dress from Vienna, it was pink, and embroidered with pearls... it was lovely, it cost 2600 crowns. Mrs M. had a wonderful outfit. Of course, it came from Paris, she always buys things there.

...Do you play bridge? We play at least three times a week at the club. But I am bored with it already. Last time I went to the Carlton bar. The Gs. were there. How they dress! Five o'clock, and in a dress without sleeves! We went to call on them to return their visit. They have only got three rooms, and not even a hall... There is going to be a golf-club here, I am looking forward to it. I am bored by tennis too, now. 118

The article was anonymous, but it could perhaps have been written by Ján Poničan, one of DAV's editors, who himself came from a very wealthy Slovak family, and was certainly in a position to verify the details of Society life<sup>119</sup>.

Wealth was, however, far from being an absolute criterion of social rank. Many leading figures in Society lived quite modestly, and intellectuals, in particular, were not noted for their affluence<sup>120</sup>. Membership of a club was perhaps a better indicator of whether someone belonged to the highest circles in society. The article quoted above mentions playing bridge at the club, and in Bratislava the most fashionable clubs were the Autoklub, the Agrárny klub, the Slovenský klub and the Umelecká beseda<sup>121</sup>. The novelist, Jaromír John, claimed of Prague:

The stratum which forms Society in the highest form of the word here (as exemplified by) Společenský klub na Příkopě and Společenský klub na Střeleckém ostrově, is comprised of intellectuals - officials, professors, journalists, officers, doctors, advocates, writers and a small number from the agricultural, entrepreneurial, trade and banking strata, who tend to be represented in the third Prague club, the Autoklub. <sup>122</sup>

John suggested that these clubs were too "democratic" to find favour with the diplomatic community in Prague, since a consular official might become a member.<sup>123</sup> In Czech terms, however, they were socially exclusive. The actress, Adina Mandlová, recalled meeting "the whole of Prague's intellectual smetánka" at Společenský klub na Příkopě. She added; "Of course, I was never a member of the club; they only accepted outstanding members of cultural and political life. I used to sign myself in daily as the guest

of one of my friends"<sup>124</sup>.

The most exclusive social formations of all were of a less formal kind, perhaps the entrée to sit at a štamtiš (Ger. Stammtisch: a reserved table for regular guests) with others of one's kind at one of the fashionable clubs. Mandlová spoke of her circle, which included leading actors and writers, referring to themselves as members of the Tafelrund<sup>125</sup>. There were also private gatherings, of which the most prestigious were the Friday afternoon meetings at the home of Karel Čapek. Masaryk and Beneš were frequent guests, along with leading academics, journalists, writers and professional men. Ferdinand Peroutka, a founder member, noted that, as the reputation of the meetings grew, people felt that participation would help to further their ambitions, and fathers took their sons along, "as if they were bestowing them with a dowry"<sup>126</sup>.

The overall impression of Czech and Slovak 'Society' does not suggest a uniform and homogeneous social group. Intellectual observers, for example, were somewhat scornful of the claimed vulgarity of the nouveaux riches. The anonymous author of an article entitled "Notes from Prague Society" in Přítomnost in 1924, spoke with disdain of the Czechs' "upper ten thousand":

...in number 100-150 individuals. They have enough money, they have adapted themselves to the way of life... Amongst the Czechs, it is sufficient that a smoked meat shop should have become a big business twenty years ago, and that the family members are fashionably dressed. 127

(It is not clear if this was intended as a direct jibe at



some specific purveyor of smoked meat - ten years later, the first edition of the Cultural Directory listed two - or whether smoked meat was mentioned because it was considered to be the food of the "popular strata"<sup>128</sup>). In a similar vein, a correspondent in the women's magazine, List paní a dívek, spoke of "Prague's nouveau riche society" being "dressed, and indeed overdressed, according to the world of fashion", and frequenting the theatre only "because they want to be seen"<sup>129</sup>. Perhaps one can detect a note of sourness because the economic bourgeoisie was taking over a social role which the intelligentsia had previously considered as its own. In 1924, when there was considerable discussion about the possibility of founding a party for the intelligentsia, in order to give them more political influence, one disgruntled social observer noted, "In today's society, the rich green-grocer is respected more than the learned intellectual in his shabby coat. Nobody is fired with any enthusiasm for culture any longer..."<sup>130</sup>

Jiří Guth-Jarkovský, who was in charge of ceremonial at the "Republican Court", noted in his memoirs that there was little social contact between the political and intellectual circles around President Masaryk and the business world<sup>131</sup>. Presumably Jaroslav Preiss, the president of the Živnostenská banka, was an exception<sup>132</sup>. Moreover, the article on Prague clubs quoted above suggested that the business élite tended to congregate socially in the Autoklub, whilst intellectuals, and one or two financiers like Preiss and Hodač, preferred Společenský klub<sup>133</sup>.

The cultural élites of the Czech Lands and Slovakia were undoubtedly distinct - the one centred in Prague, and the other in Bratislava. Since the national minorities, too, had their own élites, it would seem more appropriate to speak of upper strata, rather than one upper stratum, in inter-war Czechoslovakia.

It is clear that many Czechs and Slovaks had risen up the social scale very quickly after 1918, and initially, especially amongst the Czechs, there was a tendency to eschew the conventions of polite society, as being a relic of the Habsburg past. The writer, Edvard Valenta, explained that this "pettiness" expressed itself in the "wearing of tan shoes with evening dress", and "smacking one's lips whilst at table"<sup>134</sup>. (Apparently, even Jaroslav Preiss shared the latter habit, for Valenta recalled him "slurping, belching and sticking his knife in his mouth", when he had visited the family home during the writer's childhood<sup>135</sup>.) Twenty years of independence was hardly long enough for the nascent upper strata of Czech and Slovak society to take on a greater appearance of homogeneity, and to develop their own distinct social ethos.

### VIII Conclusion

The kind of evidence used in this chapter is, by its very nature, fragmentary - all the more so in Czechoslovakia, where the political events of 1938 and 1948 have affected both the availability of memoirs and reminiscences, and

the actual recording of past history. As a result, certain social groups are better documented here than others, and the overall picture of society is sometimes a little static. There is the occasional suggestion of social development - especially in the rise of so many Czechs and Slovaks to social prominence after the First World War, but also in the beneficial effect which social legislation had on the gross insecurity of working-class life. However, the vignettes presented here probably reveal more of the nature of broad societal divisions, than of the slowly-changing emphases of social relationships.

The Czechs and the Slovaks of the inter-war period do not, on the whole, seem to have had a very clear sense of "class" - they tended to locate themselves in the social hierarchy in terms of education, or specific occupation, or perhaps the somewhat nebulous quality of being a "gentleman". Nonetheless, the labels and divisions presented by government agencies, political parties and sociologists, do seem to have impinged on popular perceptions of society. In particular, the distinctions recognised in social legislation, once institutionalised, were readily accepted as natural and fitting, especially by those whom they benefitted.

The picture presented here is of a fragmented upper stratum, or strata, four basic occupational groupings, and a group of unfortunates whom social insurance provisions had failed to rescue from a life of considerable degradation. The quality of life for many of these people changed considerably in the twenty years of independence, as has

been shown in chapter one of this thesis. There were, moreover, deliberate campaigns to "democratise" social relationships, for example by giving up the titles milostpaní (gracious lady) and velkomožný pán (all-powerful lord), or the habit of onikání in Slovakia<sup>136</sup>. However, even if contact between "gentlemen" and "common people" was undertaken in a more democratic spirit in 1938 than in 1918, the basic distinction between the two still remained; the broad societal divisions recorded here changed little in this period.

# NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. See, for example, Marwick, Class..., which has provided a model for this study; also E.P. Thompson's classic work, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1963).
2. Marwick, op.cit., p. 128.
3. See chapter 4, p. 168-169.
4. Quoted in Bláha, Sociologie inteligence..., p. 33-34.
5. Archives of the Ethnographical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, inv. č. 928, ix/1979.
6. See chapter 3, p. 111-112.
7. See, for example, "Listy ze slovenského městečka" in Přítomnost, ii (1925), p. 277.
8. For a discussion of the English gentleman, see Raphael Samuel, "The Middle Class Between the Wars - Part 2" in New Socialist, x (1983), p. 31.
9. A. Šiláš, "Naše chyby", in Přítomnost, iv 1927, p. 435; Anton Štefánek, "Asociácia a izolácia" in Prúdy, ix (1925), p. 7.
10. See p. 221 below.
11. Leonard Boček, "Jsou obchodníci, živnostníci, řemeslníci a nižší úředníci "pány" či "lidem"?" in Sociologická revue, xi (1940), p. 77.
12. Quoted in Idea československého státu, vol.1, (Prague, 1936), p. 228.
13. See chapter 3, p. 110-111.
14. Boček, op.cit., p. 77.
15. "Listy...", p. 276.
16. Nový svět, xi (1937), p. 7.
17. Samuel, "The Middle...", p. 30.
18. Chapter 2, p. 54.
19. Chapter 3, p. 99-100.
20. Chapter 4, p. 149-150, 152.
21. Marwick, Class..., p. 129.
22. Replies to the survey were later collated, and published in book form, by the journalist, František Gelner: Gel, O lidských povoláních, 555 autorů na-

- psalo (Prague, 1931), p. 73.
23. Ibid., p. 76.
  24. Op.cit., p. 69.
  25. "Z pamětí Karla Želenského" in Lidové noviny, 24 August 1924, p. 5.
  26. Vítězslav Nezval, Z mého života (Prague, 1961), p. 40.
  27. See also chapter 4, p. 145.
  28. Chapter 3, p. 104.
  29. Galla, Dolní Roveň..., p. 314, 317; Antonín Obrdlík, Povolání a veřejného blaha (Prague, 1937), p. 97.
  30. Galla, op.cit., p. 314, 315, 317.
  31. "Proč sympatisuji s agrárním hnutím" in Brázda, xvi (1935), p. 118.
  32. Jonathan Zorach, "The Nationality Problem in the Czechoslovak Army between the Two World Wars" in East Central Europe, v (1978), p. 170-171, mentions questions based on this novel appearing in language examinations.
  33. Quoted in Antonín Matula, "Kuturní politika republikánské strany" in Brázda, ix (1929), p. 34.
  34. Archive of Charles University, Detvan 1933-1934, čís. 4/Pohronice/1.
  35. Ella Vodrážková, "Letovanie na dedine" in Živena, xxvii (1937), p. 134-135.
  36. Chapter 3, p. 99-100, 102-103.
  37. Jaro Loubal, "O udržení čeledi na statku" in Brázda xii (1931), p. 118.
  38. And therefore ineligible for social insurance.
  39. Chapter 2, p. 80-82.
  40. Chapter 3, p. 105-109 *passim*.
  41. See chapter 4, p. 133 for a discussion of the concept of a middle estate.
  42. List paní a dívek, no. 119 (1927), p. 19.
  43. Ilja Marko, Dornkappel, predmestie troch jazykov (Prague, 1938), p. 77.
  44. Quoted in Antonín Cekota, Geniální podnikatel Tomáš Baťa (Toronto, 1981), p. 35.

45. Boček, "Jsou obchodníci...", p. 75-77.
46. "I to je život", in DAV, iv (1931), p. 11.
47. See chapter 6, p. 240-241.
48. SÚA Praha MSP, D2g 1920-1927, 2019/1921 k597
49. Karel Poláček, "O povídce živnostenské" in Přítomnost, i (1924), p. 95.
50. Gel, O lidských..., p. 23
51. Jan Antonín Baťa, Budujeme stát pro 40,000,000 lidí, 2nd ed. (Zlín, 1938), p. 175.
52. Chapter 3, p. 109.
53. Chapter 2, p. 76.
54. Chapter 2, p. 56, 58.
55. Chapter 4, p. 165- 166.
56. Chapter 3, p. 110.
57. SÚA Praha MSP, D2g/P 1922-1929, 673/1921.
58. SÚA Praha MSP, D2g/N1 1922-1923-1928.
59. Jiří Beneš, Odborové ústředí "Československý svaz úřednických a zřízeneckých organizací" (Prague, 1922), p. 1.
60. Odborové ústředí Pracovní program pro podzim 1937 (Prague, 1937), p. 3-4.
61. Sčítání...1930, p. 17\*.
62. See p. 181-182.
63. Levá fronta, ii (1932), p. 114.
64. České slovo, 9 January 1930, p. 7.
65. Janko Javorinský, "Križa úradnícka - kríza národa" in Slovenská Liga, i (1924), p. 106.
66. "Patnáct procent a patnáct procent" in Tvorba, vii (1932) p. 660-6
67. Protokol VI všeodborové sjezdu Československého odborového sdružení (Prague, n.d.) p. 46.
68. Chapter 4, p. 154-156.
69. Chapter 2, p. 75, 77-79.
70. Chapter 3, p. 113.

71. See, for example, chapter 3, p. 112.
72. Antonín Obrdlík, Povolání a veřejné blaho (Prague, 1937), p. 15.
73. Ibid., p. 105.
74. See p. 197.
75. Zpráva odborového sdružení československého k VIII sjezdu všeodborovému za léta 1921-1925 (Prague, 1926), p. 107.
76. "Žijeme nad poměry" in Brázda, xvi (1935), p. 47.
77. See p. 203.
78. Hanáček, "K otázce...", p.45.
79. Chapter 3, p. 113-114.
80. Bruno Zwicker, "K sociologii nezaměstnanost" in Sociologická revue, vi (1935), p. 41; "Z pražských nocleháren" in Nezaměstnaný dělník, 23 January 1931, p. 4.
81. See chapter 6, p. 265, 273.
82. Marko, Dornkappel..., p. 135-136.
83. Quoted in Banská dedina Žakarovce (Bratislava, 1956), p. 515.
84. Gel, op.cit., p. 131.
85. Ibid., p. 95.
86. Chapter 2, p. 62-64.
87. Gel, op.cit., p. 86.
88. Ibid., p. 87.
89. Ibid., p. 9.
90. "Jen z problému dneška" in List paní a dívek, no. 121 (1927), p. 4.
91. Zwicker, op.cit., p. 304.
92. Marcela Procházková, "Lid z periferie" in Přítomnost, iii (1926), p. 73.
93. Karel Čapek, Proč nejsem komunistou (n.p., n.d.), p. 6. This is a reprint of the original article, which was published in Přítomnost in 1924.
94. Chapter 2, p. 57-58, 60-61.
95. Chapter 3, p. 117.



96. Chapter 5, p. 168-170 *passim*.
97. See Bernard Michel, Banques et banquiers en Autriche au début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris, 1976), p. 335.
98. "Glossy z pražské společnosti" in Přítomnost, i (1924), p. 673.
99. Ján Smrek, Poézia moja láska (Bratislava, 1968), p. 165. For a discussion of the "seven plum tree" nobility, see C.A. Macartney, The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918 (London, 1968), p. 57.
100. See footnote 12 above.
101. Alfons Clary, A European Past (London, 1978), p.199.
102. Robert Bruce Lockhart, Retreat from Glory (London, 1934); and Lewis Einstein, A Diplomat Looks Back (New Haven, 1968).
103. Thomas Baťa, How I began (Batanagar, 1941), p. 171.
104. The Communists managed to win considerable popular support for a "millionaires' tax" in August 1947 because of skilful use of the image of vast wealth. In fact, a million crowns was less than 10,000.
105. The Petscheks owned twenty million crowns before the First World War, in comparison to the Rothschilds' six hundred million; see Michel, *op.cit.*, p. 326.
106. Chapter 6, p. 233 and p. 275, footnote 5.
107. Holeček, Selství..., p. 421.
108. Otto Knap, "Hospodářské "in margine" státního jubilea" in Průdy, xii (1928), p. 552-553.
109. Question 7: Family. If it is a case of a noted family, the forebear from whom the family's fame dates should be listed, along with any other famous personages in the family... Similarly, relationships with other noted families should be noted briefly. See: Kulturní adresář ČSR (Prague, 1934), p. 15.
110. Pražský illustrovaný zpravodaj, no. 266 (1926), p. 13.
111. List paní a dívek, no. 11 (1925/1926), p. 18.
112. The Petscheks, described in K. Kratochvíl, Bankeři (Prague, 1962), were a German Jewish banking family. It is perhaps significant that even a modern Czech historian should choose to depict German, rather than Czech, capitalists!
113. Einstein, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

114. See their entries in Československo: biografie (Prague, 1936-1941).
115. Vladimír Vondráček, Lekář dále vzpomíná, 1920-1938 (Prague, 1977), p. 270.
116. Nina Wollmannová-Fajnerová, "Finančná rovnováha rodiny" in Živena, xxvii (1937), p. 313.
117. See chapter 6, p. 236.
118. "Mladež naša, tys' držitelkou rána" in DAV, iv (1931), p. 4.
119. See his memoirs, Ján Rob Poničan, Búrlivá Mladosť (Bratislava, 1975).
120. The Čapek brothers, whose works were best-sellers throughout this period, shared a large family villa in Vinohrady, and followed quite a modest life-style.
121. "Naš spoločenský život" in Politika, i (1931), p. 32-33.
122. B. Markolous, "Kluby a jejich anglická tradice" in Magazin DP, iii (1933), p. 108. Markolous was John's real name.
123. Loc.cit.
124. Adina Mandlová, Dneska už se tome směju, 3rd ed., (Toronto, 1981), p. 39.
125. Ibid., p. 41.
126. Ferdinand Peroutka, "Peroutka o Pátcích" in Proměny, xviii (1931), p. 51. See also the account in František Kubka, Mezi válkami (Prague, 1969).
127. "Glossy...", p. 673.
128. Josef Bezděka, director of the Society of Butchers and Smoked Meat Purveyors, and Jaroslav Horák, a senator in the National Assembly, and the owner of a large butcher's and smoked meat shop in Prague. An article in the women's magazine, List paní a dívek, no.1 (1924), p. 11, explained that the "popular strata eat too much smoked meat".
129. "Pražské kavárny" in List paní a dívek, no.30 (1925), p. 13.
130. Rudolf Malý, "O jednotnou frontou inteligence" in Kritika, i (1924), p. 331.
131. Jiří Guth-Jarkovský, Paměti, vol.3, no. 1 (Prague, 1929), p. 304.

132. Preiss's relationship with President Masaryk is described in F. Gregory Campbell, "The Castle, Jaroslav Preiss and the Živnostenská Bank" in Bohemia, Jahrbuch des Collegium Carolinum, xv (1974), p. 231-253.
133. Markolous, op.cit., p. 108.
134. Edvard Valenta, Žil jsem s milicdářem (Cologne, 1980), p. 24.
135. Ibid., p. 24.
136. Onikání is the use of the third person plural, rather than the more usual polite form, vy, as a mark of respect. The Slovak women's magazine ran an intermittent campaign to persuade its readers to call each other plain "Mrs", whilst Jaromír John suggested the need for a "League Against Titles", Markolous, op.cit., p. 164.

## Chapter 6

### The reality of class in Czechoslovakia, 1918/1938.

#### I Introduction

Previous chapters have drawn on a wide range of source materials in order to indicate contemporary perceptions of the social order in Czechoslovakia between the two World Wars. Although the term "class" was rarely used, except in a political context, it is clear from the evidence that both the Czechs and the Slovaks were conscious of a variety of social hierarchies and distinctions, be they the broad societal divisions between "gentlemen" and "people", or the more narrowly specific occupational groupings of salaried employees, small businessmen, peasants and manual workers. It remains to examine some of the demonstrable realities of social and economic inequality in the Czech Lands and Slovakia during this period, and to assess the relationships between such inequalities and commonly-held perceptions of the social order.

The extent to which social divisions were still underpinned by law, despite the egalitarian sentiments of the 1920 constitution, has been highlighted in the chapter on "Official perceptions of class" above. The evidence presented there demonstrates that both social and employment legislation conferred very different levels of protection on manual and non-manual workers, and, moreover, that certain categories of unskilled and casual labour were excluded from the full range of social benefits<sup>1</sup>. In

this chapter I will examine statistical evidence about wages, housing and education, and draw some further general conclusions about differences in life-styles and life chances amongst the various sectors of the population. I will also discuss briefly the distribution of financial and political power in inter-war Czechoslovakia, with particular reference to the lack of a clearly-defined picture of an upper stratum in the sources analysed above. Finally, I will analyse voting patterns in the four inter-war parliamentary elections, as an indicator of social stratification. From the information thus presented will emerge a picture of the socio-economic and political significance of class in inter-war Czechoslovakia.

## II Income, wealth and occupation

Jan Mertl, one of the sociologists whose writings have been analysed in chapter four above, was in no doubt about the close correlation between incomes and class. Indeed, he ventured the opinion that:

The most important, and in many cases the only, decisive factor on the formation of class consciousness /is/... the individual's economic situation. 2

Yet it is noticeable that many of the sources analysed in previous chapters appear to play down the importance of income as a socially-divisive factor. The impoverished official was a common social stereotype, found in the political party programmes and in newspaper articles alike. Claims that there was little economic distinction

between such badly-paid salaried employees and skilled manual workers abound, sometimes with the intention of persuading the former that they, too, were proletarians, and sometimes rather to draw attention to cultural and behavioural differences between the two groups<sup>3</sup>. The implication that society in Czechoslovakia was relatively homogeneous in economic terms was present, also, in the many observations about the lack of a substantial upper stratum of wealth<sup>4</sup>. It is clear that an examination of income and wealth distribution in the inter-war period is essential to the better understanding of contemporary perceptions of the social order in Czechoslovakia, and in particular of the Czechs' self-image as a society of the "little man".

Both primary and secondary sources supply numerous tables and statistics relating to the economic situation of the Czechoslovak population between 1918 and 1938. Inconsistencies in the various analyses sometimes make cross-reference difficult, but there can be no doubt that material inequalities in Czechoslovakia were considerable. For instance, a survey undertaken to assess the distribution of wealth in March 1919, in order to tax war-time profiteers, revealed that about half the adult population of Czechoslovakia was propertyless. The 61% of property owners who were worth less than 10,000 crowns owned 7% of all the property recorded, while the 3141 millionaires (in terms of Czechoslovak crowns), who formed only 0.08% of all property owners, owned 14%<sup>5</sup>. The ensuing tax on profits made between 1914 and 1919 did little to alter the overall distribution of wealth - as the journalist

Ferdinand Peroutka explained, "Many fish got away"<sup>6</sup>.

There has been no systematic research into the effects of, for example, nostrification, or the economic crises of the early 1920s and the early 1930s, on the overall distribution of wealth and incomes in Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, published sources are often very unspecific, failing even to reveal nationality ratios in their presentation of statistics, and economic historians tend to concentrate their analyses almost entirely on manual worker's wages. What is clear is that, for the majority of the population, incomes were very low. There was not such a sharp distinction between the working class and the rest of the economically-active population as in Great Britain, partly because of the many self-employed peasant farmers and tradesmen; big inequalities, as in France and America, appear more clearly further up in the business and professional strata<sup>7</sup>. Figures for 1927, based on the tax statistics, reveal the following pattern for annual incomes:

Table 2<sup>8</sup>

Annual income in Czechoslovak crowns	Number of recip- ients	Percentage of recipients
-6,000	3,356,146	50.65%
6-9,000	2,387,275	38.12%
9-25,000	457,335	7.51%
25-100,000	215,577	3.48%
100-500,000	14,167	0.22%
Over 500,000	912	0.02%

A study using tax statistics for 1937, when nominal wages had begun to recover from the effects of the Depression, concentrates on the lower and middle ranges of the sal-

ary scale:

Table 3<sup>9</sup>

Annual income in Czechoslovak crowns	Percentage of recipients		
-3,000	27.2%	} 56.0%	} 74.1%
3-6,000	28.8%		
6-9,000	18.1%		
9-12,000	9.8%		
12-15,000	7.9%		
15-18,000	2.0%		
Over 18,000	6.2%		

The influence of unemployment, which still stood at over 400,000 in 1937, in depressing working-class incomes, is obvious from the increase in the number of people earning less than 6,000 crowns a year. Equally striking is the 14.7% decrease in those earning less than 9,000 crowns a year, which suggests a noticeable overall increase in income differentials.

Such figures are best understood in an international perspective. Comparative studies of the real wages of manual workers, produced by the International Labour Organisation, suggest that, on 1 January 1929, workers in Prague earned only 25% of their counterparts in Philadelphia, 50% of their counterparts in London, and 88% of their counterparts in Paris<sup>10</sup>. In the same year, the average annual income of manual workers, including the unemployed, has been calculated as approximately 7,400 crowns, whilst statistics from the Všeobecný pensijní ústav (General Pensions' Institute) show that 28.6% of white-collar workers in employment earned less than 9,000 crowns a year<sup>11</sup>. The awareness of having a low standard



of living in comparison to Great Britain or the United States, which is apparent in many of the sources, was obviously justified - as indeed was the image of the badly-paid official, when applied to the lower ranks of public and private service<sup>12</sup>.

The most detailed treatment of higher income levels can be found in an analysis based on the tax statistics from 1928. Unfortunately there is no breakdown by nationality, so it is impossible to tell how many of the really wealthy were Czech, rather than German or Jewish, although it is clear that most of them were based in Bohemia and Moravia. In 1928, 15,490 people (only 1,924 of them in Slovakia) earned more than 100,000 crowns a year. Of these, 10,968 were classed as "self-employed". 327 people had an annual income of more than one million crowns (only nineteen of them in Slovakia), and 24 people, all located in the Czech Lands, earned more than five million crowns a year. Indeed, the average annual income of this latter group was actually just over eleven million crowns, at a time when fifty per cent of wage earners received less than 6,000 crowns a year, and the average annual income of an official in private service was 18,600 crowns. Table four shows the sources of income for selected income groups.

After the salary reforms of 1926, top civil servants could earn about 100,000 crowns a year as their basic salary, whilst leading army officers received 78,000 crowns. A parliamentary deputy's salary in the early

Table 4: Sources of income for selected groups<sup>13</sup>

Annual income	Number of persons	Land	Buildings	Business concerns	Salary	Returns from capital	Other
50-60,000	16,544	13.9%	2.5%	42.8%	33.4%	5.8%	1.6%
100-120,000	4,384	10.8%	3.3%	49.6%	24.6%	9.1%	2.6%
500-1,000,000	689	9.4%	2.4%	52.2%	16.9%	13.4%	5.7%
2-3,000,000	67	32.2%	0.8%	41.5%	4.4%	12.4%	8.7%
Over 5,000,000	24	29.7%	0.1%	43.2%	0.0%*	23.3%	3.7%

\* Too small to register

1930s was 72,000 crowns a year, whilst a director of Škoda might receive 150,000 crowns or more<sup>14</sup>. Such salaries were very large when compared to the average annual earnings of a white-collar worker, to say nothing of a manual worker. However, salaries formed only a small proportion of total annual revenue for the very wealthy. As in other industrial countries, the upper stratum of wealth in inter-war Czechoslovakia supported itself mainly from business profits and other investment income. The Škoda director, for instance, would receive a percentage of the firm's annual profits, often far in excess of his basic salary. Despite the land reform, landed wealth continued to be an important source of revenue, second only to income from business profits for those in receipt of more than one million crowns a year. Moreover, amongst the 24 multi-millionaires, only one was recorded as having any "earned" income at all, and that was too negligible an amount to register in the statistics given above<sup>15</sup>.

Despite the impersonal nature of the tax statistics, there can be no doubt that some Czechs were included in the highest income bracket. Both Tomáš Baťa and his successor Jan Antonín Baťa, for instance, were self-confessed multi-millionaires. The claim by the former that there were few truly rich people in the Czechoslovak Republic is, however, confirmed by this evidence<sup>16</sup>. The level of incomes recorded in the 1928 tax statistics (when there were approximately 140 crowns to the pound) compares with France, rather than Britain or America, which both had much higher gross national incomes<sup>17</sup>.

The various statistics quoted above reveal the existence of great inequalities of wealth and income in inter-war Czechoslovakia. The State Office of Statistics produced, in addition, periodic analyses of family budgets, which make it possible to trace a more intimate connection between income and occupation. The report on "Consumption in the families of manual workers, lower-ranking non-manual workers and officials" from 1931/1932, for instance gives a clear indication of income differentials. The average annual income of the head of the household for those families participating in this survey ranged from 7,066 crowns for unskilled workers; 10,919 crowns for skilled workers; 16,132 crowns for foremen and master-craftsmen; 15,551 crowns for zřizenci; 21,923 crowns for lower-grade state officials; 22,136 crowns for lower-grade officials in the private sector; 32,512 crowns for higher-grade officials in the private sector; to 37,871 crowns for higher-grade officials in state service<sup>18</sup>.

Patterns of consumption reflected these income differentials. Workers' diets, for example, relied more heavily on bread and potatoes than did those of all categories of non-manual employees; they were more likely to drink ersatz coffee, rather than the ground coffee favoured by non-manual employees, and far less likely to drink wine. With the exception of the most highly-paid, the foremen and master craftsmen, workers also ate noticeably less fruit and vegetables than non-manual employees<sup>19</sup>. These findings suggested that the diet of the average worker was deficient in animal proteins, and had a low vitamin and

mineral content. Three doctors were, therefore, prompted to devise a more healthy diet for working-class families. Despite using cheap sources of protein, and omitting alcohol, they were, however, forced to conclude that, at the prices and wage-levels of 1934, their "ideal" diet would prove too expensive for sixty per cent of manual workers with a five-member family<sup>20</sup>.

It is clear that styles of life were closely allied to income and occupation, and that, for the working class, material deprivation was commonplace. Moreover, certain sectors of the community had particularly low standards of living. Agricultural labourers were notoriously badly paid, which often led to resentment of the urban proletariat; figures for 1930 suggest that their average wages were only 51% of the average for all manual employees. In 1929, the average hourly wage in the Škoda factories was 5.30 crowns, whilst, in the same year, the average daily wage for a seasonal worker in agriculture, with experience of reaping, in the Czech Lands, was 7.25 crowns<sup>21</sup>. Such discrepancies added emphasis to the town/country divide. Moreover, the old, the sick and the unemployed frequently faced great economic hardship. The minimum guaranteed pension for a worker was only 500 crowns a year, whilst unemployed persons who were not eligible for benefits under the Ghent system received only ten crowns a week, if single, and twenty crowns, if married<sup>22</sup>. These subsidies were not payable to house owners, even if they were totally destitute, neither, until 1935, were they payable to people who had been

self-employed. State aid was allocated strictly in accordance with the numbers of unemployed registered locally, and such bureaucratic systems were much more efficient in the Czech Lands than in Slovakia<sup>23</sup>. It is hardly surprising that the surveys undertaken there by the Slovak students' organisation, Detvan, recorded scenes of great destitution. In the Pohronice district, for example, it was claimed that:

The undernourishment of the inhabitants of some districts is so great that mothers are unable to breast-feed their babies. One of the most common diseases is rickets, which according to the local doctor affects about fifty per cent of the children in the Čierny Balog district... The population... is totally without employment or earnings. It does not receive even the most basic needs of life - everywhere shortages, poverty and under-nourishment reign. 24

It is obvious that many people in need received little or no benefit from social insurance provisions, and even some of those in employment earned so little that their economic level was far below that of the average manual worker.

Extreme hardship was more common in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands and, as has been shown, there were far fewer people in the highest income brackets/<sup>too</sup>in the Eastern province. Wage levels as a whole tended to be lower, especially for manual workers. Figures from 1933 suggest that average wages in the textile industry, for example, were only 73% of those in Bohemia, and in transport 83%<sup>25</sup>. The differentials in agriculture were similar, and Slovak agricultural workers employed in the Czech Lands often earned less than locals<sup>26</sup>. So great were the discrep-

ancies in living standards, that one must be cautious in treating the country as one social entity. Although the basic social stereotypes perceived by the Czechs and the Slovaks appear to coincide, they often meant very different things.

It is evident that there were considerable differences in incomes and levels of property ownership between the main social groups in inter-war Czechoslovakia. The majority of people had low incomes in comparison with both national and foreign averages. Moreover, lower-grade officials and zřizenci were often badly-off, although their situation was usually perceptibly better than that of manual workers. In addition there were very many small shopkeepers, tradesmen and peasants with low incomes, although amongst the ranks of the self-employed there was also a small upper stratum of wealth, whose income was over one million crowns a year (about £7,200)<sup>27</sup>. The effects of income differentials were revealed in diet patterns, with large numbers of working-class people apparently suffering from some degree of under-nourishment. The lowest income groups, amongst whom small-holders were particularly numerous in Slovakia, formed a stratum which might be described as an "under-class".

### III Housing and the "geography of class"

Just as the average income in inter-war Czechoslovakia was low by the standards of Western Europe and the U.S.A.,

so the average size of dwellings was, for the majority of the population, smaller than in comparable industrialised countries. Nonetheless, both the size and quality of housing remained one of the most fundamental indicators of social divisions, as, in urban districts, did geographical location.

An awareness that the housing conditions of even high-ranking Czechs and Slovaks were quite modest led one observer to compare "spacious English homes, where it is possible to arrange dances or bridge evenings" and "English country seats, where friends can meet 52 weekends in the year" with Prague's "three-room flats", and to conclude "our poverty is an insurmountable barrier against the formation of a Society in the Western sense"<sup>28</sup>. While a few members of Czechoslovakia's economic élite did live in castles and palaces (the Czech textile family, the Bartoň-Dobeníns, are an example), it is true that the town-based businessman, politician or intellectual often had only a smallish flat. Jaroslav Preiss, the managing director of the Živnostenská banka, is recorded as having lived in a four-room flat in the centre of Prague, where he entertained only close friends. For many years, when he went to the country for the weekend, he stayed in an inn at Orlík<sup>29</sup>. Other prominent figures were less abstemious; the Čapek brothers, or members of the Jewish banking family, the Petscheks, for example, chose to live in solid detached family villas. These could cost as much as one million crowns to build, but they hardly bore comparison with the town houses of the British aristo-



cracy<sup>30</sup>.

As in other countries, certain residential areas in the major Czechoslovak towns were associated with particular income groups. In Bratislava, the street known as Pališády was perhaps the most socially-acceptable address, whilst in Prague, the highest rents and the largest flats were to be found in Josefov in the Old Town (in 1930, only 6.7% of the inhabitants of this district were manual workers). Dejvice, Bubeneč and Vinohrady all contained large and expensive family houses too, and the Čapeks shared a villa in Ve Stromkách (lit. Amongst the Trees) in the latter suburb. At the other end of the social scale, some districts were characterised by high-density and often sub-standard working-class housing. Parts of Podhradí in Bratislava, and Žižkov, Vysočany and Košiče in Prague, are examples<sup>31</sup>. Surveys undertaken in Prague in the late 1920s and the early 1930s found that over ten per cent of the inhabitants of Vysočany and Košiče fell into the category of "socially needy"<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, the acute housing shortage, and often high rents, in the major towns led workers to construct "emergency colonies" (nouzové kolonie) in the outskirts, some of which deserve the title "shanty towns". In Bratislava one of the largest was Dornkappel, where hundreds of small houses were built of rubble, whilst the worst examples in Prague were Na Krejčáru and Na Židovských Pecích in Žižkov<sup>33</sup>.

The two official urban housing censuses of 1921 and 1930 make it possible to compare the quality of housing for the

major social groups. It is clear that most dwellings in towns were small - the average size in Prague was 2.34 rooms in 1921, but in fact 67.9% of all Prague dwellings consisted simply of one room, or one room and a kitchen. In the largely working-class Bohemian town of Kladno, which had grown up around iron foundries, 42.32% of all dwellings consisted simply of one room, whilst a further 36.33% comprised one room and a kitchen. This situation was only marginally improved by 1930. However, the working class were far likely to live in one room, or one room and a kitchen, than other social groups. In 1930, in the Czech Lands, workers' dwellings had 1.7 rooms on average, in comparison to 2.2 for zřizenci, 3.3 for officials and 3.0 for the self-employed. In Slovakia, the figures were 1.8 (workers), 2.4 (zřizenci), 3.5 (officials) and 3.3 (self-employed) respectively<sup>34</sup>. It should be noted that the 1930 housing census was limited to towns with a population of over 10,000. In small towns and villages dwellings were often larger.

The detailed description of urban dwellings undertaken in 1930 allows a comparison of housing amenities, which is very revealing of differences in standards of living. Table five gives some idea of the lay-out of dwellings for the four major social groups recognised by the census, whilst the availability of basic amenities such as running water is shown in table six. It is clear that officials' dwellings were by far the most spacious and well-equipped, and that having a servant was often part of their life-style. However, the qualitative difference

Table 5: The lay-out of dwellings in Czechoslovakia<sup>35</sup>

	Separate kitchen	Servant's room	Hall	Pantry	Bathroom	Inside toilet
Self-employed	88.9%	12.0%	38.1%	35.8%	19.8%	36.9%
Officials	92.9%	21.3%	66.8%	63.4%	48.6%	67.2%
<u>Zrizenci</u>	89.8%	3.0%	37.7%	36.3%	14.3%	35.4%
Workers	76.8%	0.3%	20.1%	18.1%	3.3%	15.7%

Table 6: The availability of basic amenities<sup>36</sup>

	Gas	Electricity	Water	Own toilet
Self-employed	22.0%	73.2%	73.8%	39.2%
Officials	39.3%	92.2%	89.1%	68.3%
<u>Zrizenci</u>	15.0%	76.9%	76.1%	37.6%
Workers	4.8%	58.3%	58.4%	17.4%

in housing conditions between zřizenci and manual workers is also striking.

That such differences in the standard of housing for the various social groups were accepted as the norm is illustrated by the housing provisions made by firms for their employees. The Dynamit Nobel Factory in Bratislava, for example, had separate housing developments for manual workers, skilled craftsmen and officials. Workers' flats consisted of one large room and a kitchen. They had no pantry or bathroom, and one W.C. was provided for every four or five families. Housing for skilled craftsmen was of a higher standard, but suffered from the disadvantage of being near to the factory, as these employees were on call day and night. Officials' flats had between three and five rooms, and their own bathrooms, larders and halls, whilst the factory's manager had a large detached villa with a garden<sup>37</sup>.

Housing such as that provided for the manual workers of Dynamit Nobel may seem to have suffered from serious inadequacies in terms of space and amenities; it was, however, far superior to what the housing census of 1930 discreetly called "Provisional" dwellings. In Prague, people are recorded as having lived in brickyards, shacks, and discarded railway carriages<sup>38</sup>. An investigation undertaken in the working-class district of Košiče, to explore the links between children's progress at school and their living conditions, revealed some appalling housing conditions. More than half the flats in this district were

officially considered to be overcrowded; some had as many as eleven people living in one room, and it was found that one child slept at night on his grandmother's knee, because there was not enough room to lie down<sup>39</sup>. The notion of there being an underclass in inter-war Czechoslovakia, living far below the normal social and economic level of the working class, finds further support in Otakar Machotka's investigation of "socially needy" families in Prague in the early 1930s. The majority of the unskilled workers in Machotka's survey lived in one-room flats, without W.C.s, bathrooms, or running water, and lit simply by oil lamps. They had far fewer beds than there were family members, and many slept on the floor, on chairs and on boxes. Overcrowding, with flats being occupied by anything from two to ten times as many people as there was space for, was the lot of the overwhelming majority<sup>40</sup>. In Slovakia, the Communist journal DV published frequent exposés of the living conditions of the poor and desperate, one example being an article by the poet Ján Rob Poničan about people living in "underground holes" in Senec, not far from Bratislava<sup>41</sup>.

It is clear that housing reflected the basic social divisions in inter-war Czechoslovakia. Certain districts in the cities were occupied by members of particular social groups. The average size of dwellings was small, though some members of the upper strata lived in substantial residences. Much of the housing lacked basic amenities, but conditions for the working class were substantially worse than for other social groups, including zřizenci.

At the bottom of the social scale were those whose living conditions scarcely merited description as "housing".

#### IV Education and life chances

Education was traditionally a source of great social prestige in both the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Its importance as an attribute of status has been emphasised in previous chapters; in the ubiquitous social divisions, "gentlemen and people" and "intelligentsia and people", formal educational qualifications were the factor most decisive in categorising someone's social status. Studies of the inter-war Czechoslovak Republic sometimes give the impression that it was always possible for "a poor boy to get help in paying his way through secondary school if his teachers found him talented, thus ensuring every potential leader a good education"<sup>42</sup>. There were indeed very many examples of "poor boys made good", amongst them the first President of the Republic, Tomáš Masaryk, the son of a coachman. However, it would be false to claim that it was easy for children from the lower social strata to complete a secondary-school, let alone a university education.

The majority of children, in fact, never got beyond elementary school (obecná or ľudová škola). According to one study, in the school year of 1926/1927, 58.3% of all children in the 11-14 age band were studying at elementary school, 36.4% at higher elementary school (měštanská škola) and only 5.3% in the prestigious grammar schools

(gymnasia)<sup>43</sup>. Children in rural districts were at an obvious disadvantage, as the nearest měšťanská škola, let alone grammar school, was often many miles away. Village society was conservative, and aspirations to secondary or higher education were beyond the comprehension of many peasants. A bright child's future often depended on support from the local teacher or the village priest. A sociological survey of one Slovak village found that the local priest believed that it would be bad for the village to lose all its intelligent sons, and did not encourage parents to send their children away to school, with the result that there were very few village children in the nearest secondary school<sup>44</sup>. This example was, almost certainly, not unique.

The children of the urban working class had far more opportunities for education than the children of peasants and agricultural labourers. There was a much wider availability of secondary schools of all kinds, as well as higher elementary schools, in the towns, and townspeople often had a far greater awareness of the career opportunities which a good education might bring than did the peasantry. A survey of higher elementary schools, undertaken in 1929/1930, suggested that there was a lower percentage of working-class children in such schools in Prague than elsewhere in the Republic, because "in Prague ... even industrial workers send their talented children to secondary schools, in order to assure them of a better future"<sup>45</sup>. Nonetheless, Zdeněk Ullrich and Jan Doležal, who made a study of the family backgrounds and career aspirations of all the secondary-school graduates in the

Czech Lands, in the academic year 1933/1934, came to the general conclusion that:

For the worker to put his son, or indeed his daughter through a complete secondary education entails a great sacrifice. It requires not only a considerable financial sacrifice, but also great courage, and an important re-orientation of the mentality of a manual wage-earner... to take this step. 46

Not all the small percentage of children who entered one of the four types of grammar school completed the full course of studies. The drop-out rate was high, especially at the end of the fourth year, which marked the first completed cycle of study, and also qualified pupils for entry into teacher-training institutes, which were free (grammar schools were fee-paying)<sup>47</sup>. Needless to say, the proportion of working-class children to complete the maturita, the secondary-school leaving certificate, was very small. Ullrich and Doležal recorded that, in 1933/1934, there were 128 secondary-school graduates for every 10,000 officials in the Czech Lands, 25 for every 10,000 zřizenci, 13 for every 10,000 self-employed persons and only 4 for every 10,000 manual workers<sup>48</sup>.

For those secondary-school pupils who managed to graduate, the maturita was a necessary qualification for executive posts in the civil service, and for admission to the officers' training academy. It also bestowed an automatic right to a place in a university. The only study of the social origins of university students was undertaken in Brno in the early years of the Republic, shortly after the establishment of the Masaryk university.



Of the students at Brno's four university-level institutions, in the academic year 1921/1922, 47.2% came from the families of self-employed persons and tenants, 33.5% from officials' families, 9.4% from workers' families, 4.4% from pensioners' families, and 5.5% did not specify their origins. In 1922/1923, the figures were 44.2 (self-employed), 35.3% (officials), 8.4% (workers), 3.2% (pensioners) and 8.9% (unspecified)<sup>49</sup>. The relatively high figures for workers can probably be explained in that, like the 1921 census, the survey did not distinguish zřizenci as a separate social category.

The situation in Slovakia deserves special mention. Although the expansion of education in that province after independence was extremely rapid, the number of schools and other educational establishments continued to lag behind that in the Czech Lands. A statistical survey published in 1935 gave the following figures:

Table 7<sup>50</sup>

	Slovakia	Bohemia	Moravia
I Institutes of tertiary education	1	7	6
- universities	1	2	1
II Secondary schools	59	182	101
III Specialist schools	113	384	236
-trade and commerce	20	52	30
-industrial schools	38	161	89
IV Continuation courses	433	1542	814
V Elementary schools	4489	9217	5251
-higher elementary	167	1095	631
-kindergartens	151	1366	961

In 1930, the population of Bohemia was just over seven million, of Moravia-Silesia three and a half million, and

of Slovakia three and a quarter million. That there were far greater opportunities for secondary and tertiary education in the "western provinces is apparent.

Educational opportunity, or the lack of it, did much to determine the life-chances of the various social groups in inter-war Czechoslovakia. Careers in state service, for example, depended very rigidly on formal academic qualifications. Anton Štefánek's private papers reveal that, although he was largely responsible for reorganising education in Slovakia after 1918, the Ministry of Education then found it necessary to give him one year's paid leave of absence to complete his doctorate, in order to be able to offer him a job at a high administrative level in Prague<sup>51</sup>. Although education at all levels was open to the talented children from the lower social strata, both financial constraints, and the rigidity of the system, were often a barrier to their successful completion of a secondary or higher education. Zdeněk Ullrich concluded his survey of secondary-school graduates with the remark that in Czechoslovakia, unlike the U.S.A., social mobility in one generation was not usual. "Upward social mobility... does not take place in [a single] leap, but rather in successive short steps"<sup>52</sup>.

#### V Power and authority in inter-war Czechoslovakia

The lack of any clear perception of an upper stratum or/upper strata in Czech and Slovak societies has been a recurrent theme in the analysis of the various kinds of source mat-

erial in previous chapters. It is clear that in inter-war Czechoslovakia, as elsewhere, there were government ministers, high-ranking bureaucrats and financial magnates whose share of political and economic power was infinitely greater than that of the majority of the population. Whether there was, however, a distinct upper class, in which family tradition had considerable influence on access to power and authority, is a matter of some debate.

In societies where industrialisation had proceeded slowly, and where there was little or no native aristocracy, education had long been of great importance as a means to social mobility. Independence in 1918 created enormous career opportunities for both Czechs and Slovaks, and formal educational qualifications were the obvious criterion for filling high positions in the new state. Of the 88 inter-war Czech and Slovak ministers, no fewer than 40 were doctors of law, three were doctors of medicine, six were doctors of philosophy, eight were engineers, and many others seem to have followed some kind of higher education<sup>53</sup>. Entry to the higher administrative grades of the civil service was rigidly dependent on educational qualifications, and a doctorate, normally a doctorate of law was the necessary pre-requisite for a top bureaucratic post. The new diplomatic corps, hastily assembled after 1918, was made up largely of academics, lawyers, writers and journalists<sup>54</sup>. Only in the army, whose social prestige was comparatively low, could those with only a basic education have a good chance of establishing a successful career (at least if they had been prominent in the Czecho-

slovak legions, like Gajda). However, after 1926, educational standards were raised, and prospective officers had to graduate from the military academy, where the maturita was the basic entry requirement<sup>55</sup>.

The importance of education as a stepping stone to power did make it possible for the able and energetic to get to the top, whatever their family background. However, as explained above, children from professional families were far more likely to achieve academic success than those from the poorer strata. There were, however, opportunities for workers to rise directly through the party movement, political journalism or the trades unions. Six of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic ministers from the inter-war years, and one National Socialist, were former workers who had taken this road to power. For small peasant farmers, such possibilities were rare; as one contemporary put it, "How many real farmers leave their... ploughs daily in order to play a leading role in the Agrarian Party"<sup>56</sup>. Although five Agrarian ministers had no more than basic education, all were substantial landowners.

It is clear that family traditions did lead some people into careers in politics and public service, although the real age of the civil service dynasty was over even before the First World War<sup>57</sup>. Of President Masaryk's four children, Herbert died during the war, and Olga married abroad, but Jan was ambassador to London, and became Foreign Secretary after the Second World War, whilst Alice was a dep-

uty in the Revolutionary National Assembly, as a representative for Slovakia, and afterwards President of the Czechoslovak Red Cross. President Beneš had no children, but his brother Vojta was a parliamentary deputy, and later a senator (albeit for the Social Democratic Party), whilst Jiří, the son of another brother, was active in the trades union movement, and later became a political journalist for Beneš's own National Socialists. Ladislav Rašín, who played a leading role in the National Democratic Party in the 1930s, was another example of family connections in politics; his father, Alois Rašín, had been Minister of Finance until his assassination in 1923. It would, however, be an exaggeration to speak of political dynasties<sup>58</sup>.

With the exception of Tomáš Baťa, no members of the economic bourgeoisie really captured the public imagination in inter-war Czechoslovakia, although the names of such leading figures as the banker, Jaroslav Preiss, must have been well-known. One reason for the comparative anonymity of business and finance was that few large firms were family-owned. In 1930, an article in Naše Doba claimed, "nowhere in the world is industrial production so closely linked to bank capital as in the Czechoslovak Republic, where individual banks control the majority of industry"<sup>59</sup>. By the mid-1930s there were only 56 independent entrepreneurs left in the mining industry, in the building industry only ten per cent of enterprises were family concerns, and in the rest of industry, on average, twenty-eight per cent<sup>60</sup>. In addition, there was consid-

erable foreign participation in industry, accounting for twenty-five per cent of all companies' total economic capital. Investment was particularly heavy in the mining and metallurgical industries, whilst the French Schneider Company held seventy-three per cent of the joint stock capital of the Škoda armaments works<sup>61</sup>. The inner circle of the inter-war business and financial élite were bank directors and industrial managers, rather than the scions of a family firm.

Jaroslav Preiss, general director of the largest bank, the Živnostenská banka, was probably the arch-capitalist in inter-war Czechoslovakia. He was president of the Union of Czechoslovak Industrialists, and the Czech Bank Union, vice-president of the Mining and Metallurgical Company, and on the boards of many sugar refineries, of the engineering works Českomoravská-Kolben-Daňek (ČKD), the Mautner textile factories, the insurance company Securitas, and many other concerns. During the course of his professional life, Preiss served on the boards of more than forty different concerns. Although not from a humble background (his father was a district judge) Preiss was very much a self-made man. His career pattern was similar to that of many leading political figures; he studied at the universities of Prague, Leipzig and Graz, received a doctorate in law, and worked as economic correspondent, first for Národní listy, and then for the Živnostenská banka's own financial journal<sup>62</sup>.

A successful university career was a starting point for many other individuals in the business world, for example,

the Mařík brothers, who were both directors of ČKD. However, burgeoning family connections can also be traced amongst the economic bourgeoisie. Joe [sic] Hartmann, a leading figure in the sugar industry, and a director of twenty-five concerns, was the son of Richard Hartmann, himself a director of the Schoeller sugar works, and he married Jaroslav Preiss's daughter, Věra, in 1923. There are many other examples of second generation business entrepreneurs, such as the Havel Brothers, co-owners of the Lucerna palace in Prague, and both actively involved in the film industry, or Ctakar and Ivo Kruliš-Randa, who were mining engineers like their father, and prominent members of the boards of several metallurgical companies. The Czech business and financial élite may have been a late-comer to the social scene, but it is obvious that, by 1938, a strong, inter-connected business community did exist. Ferdinand Mellan's entry from the official national biography, Československo, typifies this. Mellan had been active in the Young Czech Party in the late nineteenth century, and was a director of ČKD. His son, Jaroslav, was a leading Prague lawyer, whilst his four daughters married a brewery-owner, a wholesale-trader, a high official in the Anglo-Czech Bank, and the owner of a printing firm respectively<sup>63</sup>.

Most members of the business and financial élite played little active role in party politics at the parliamentary level, although a number of them were members of the National Democratic Party<sup>64</sup>. However, it is easy to demonstrate a close interrelationship between business

and government in the inter-war period. Jaroslav Preiss, for example, was one of the architects of financial policy in the early years of the Republic<sup>65</sup>. Moreover, many politicians had business interests. In 1931 a committee was set up to consider whether membership of the board of directors of an industrial, commercial or financial enterprise was incompatible with the duties of a parliamentary deputy. After long deliberations, the committee reached the decision that every case should be treated on its own merits, a verdict which was hardly surprising since the final report revealed that, in the third electoral period of 1929/1935, 115 deputies held 345 places on the boards of 15 banks, 63 savings institutions, 16 insurance firms, 73 cooperatives, 32 heavy industrial and 23 light industrial concerns, 10 breweries, distilleries and sugar refineries, 6 transport concerns and 33 printing and publishing houses. Ladislav Novák, a senator for the National Democratic Party and sometime Minister of Trade, took the lead, with a seat on fifteen boards<sup>66</sup>. Ministers had to renounce their directorships when actually in office. However, concerns such as the Škoda armaments works, which was dependent on the government for orders, got around this restriction by informing ministers that a place on the board would be theirs as soon as their term of office came to an end. Since a director of Škoda could earn as much as 200,000 crowns a year, and a percentage of the firm's profits, this was a good way to involve public figures in reciprocal services<sup>67</sup>.

Agrarian capital also had considerable political influence. The Agrarian Party was able to bring about the reintroduc-



tion of tariffs on grain products in 1925 and 1926, despite the fact that this hit trade with the other countries of the Little Entente, and also aroused the bitter opposition of the socialist parties. In 1934, the party was instrumental in the creation of the Czechoslovak Grain Company, which was given a monopoly of internal and external trade in grain, fodder and flour products. This monopoly was beneficial to medium and large farmers, who produced for the market, but it also led to a rise in food prices<sup>68</sup>. Although the interests of agriculture and industry were sometimes at odds, noticeably over tariff policies, it should not be forgotten that the Agrární banka had considerable industrial investments, and that many industrialists were also landowners.

The financial power and potential influence of some businessmen and landowners was clearly considerable. The ordinary citizen, the far-from-wealthy "little Czech (or indeed Slovak) man", had scant influence over the running of his country. Although there was universal suffrage, the system of proportional representation, which involved voting for a party list, rather than for a specific candidate, meant that representatives had little sense of direct responsibility to their constituencies. The party reigned supreme; the average parliamentary deputy or senator was unable to exercise much personal initiative, if he voted against the party line he could lose his seat immediately, in mid-session. Real political power was largely the monopoly of a few party leaders, who might, of course, have risen from the lower social strata, like

the Social Democrat, Rudolf Bechyně, an ex-locksmith<sup>69</sup>. Even so, there was much compromise within the various government coalitions, and the socialist parties, for example, were frequently forced to modify their social policy demands<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, the patronage which was so much part of the political system, including much de facto control over positions in state service, was the prerogative of the parties of government. The Communist Party, which was in permanent opposition, or Hlinka's Slovak Populist Party, which joined the government coalition only for a short period in the late 1920s, could distribute only limited largesse to their followers<sup>71</sup>.

Both manual workers and salaried employees were very highly unionised, especially in the period immediately following independence. Despite early discussions about the need for greater unity, the trades union movement remained highly fragmented, as it had under the Habsburgs. However, the two main socialist federations, and especially the Social Democrats' Odborové ústředí, were sufficiently strong to have some influence over government policy. Certain union leaders, like Bechyně, or the National Socialist, Alois Tučný, rose high in the party system, and even became ministers. Moreover, union representatives sat on the Advisory Committee for Economic Affairs, set up in 1921, and they were also active in the Sociální ústav, which had responsibility for investigating social issues. In addition, the Ghent system of unemployment relief was actually administered by the unions, giving them an institutionalised role which they had at first

welcomed. Lev Winter, the Social Democrat who was the main architect of the scheme, expressed the opinion that the trades unions would thereby become the backbone of Czechoslovak economic structure<sup>72</sup>.

However, the failure of the Communist-led general strike in December 1920 probably marked an end to any real hopes of radical change in the social system. Subsequent legislation, like the Act of 1921, which authorised, often post facto, the setting up of factory committees, proved to delimit the extent of workers' rights to consultation, rather than providing the first step on the road to "economic democracy". The last really important reform was the Social Insurance Act of 1924, and this did not involve the creation of a unified system of insurance, as had initially been envisaged by the Social Democratic Party, and its union federation. After the establishment <sup>the first time</sup> for / of a coalition government from which the socialists were excluded, in 1925, there were no further improvements in existing social legislation, other than some modifications to the system of unemployment relief, which were forced by the Depression<sup>75</sup>.

With the introduction of deflationary policies to meet the economic crisis of the early 1920s, union membership fell. An upsurge in the numbers of those unionised in the 1930s, especially amongst salaried employees, could be seen as a desperate reaction to the economic situation, rather than a show of strength. Under the Ghent system, which proved to be an intolerable strain on union funds, unemployment pay went only to union members of six or more

months standing. Despite their strength in numbers, the salaried employees' unions had no success in reversing the Agrarian-sponsored Act of 1934, which created a probationary period for state employees, during which time they received only a token salary<sup>76</sup>. Moreover, the number of "yellow unions", organised by employers, also rose during this period. The National Democrats' unions had some success amongst the textile workers of North Bohemia, whilst the Agrarian unions were able to recruit workers in the unlikely venue of the Škoda works, where the Agrární banka was a major investor<sup>77</sup>. By 1936, union membership stood at just over 2,219,000, in comparison to 1,618,000 in 1927, and 1,979,000 in 1921<sup>78</sup>. However, despite the overall increase in numbers, there can be little doubt that the trades unions had less power than at the outset of the independent Czechoslovak Republic.

All the evidence suggests that certain élite groups in Czech and Slovak society wielded a disproportionate influence in comparison to their numbers, which is as might be expected. The apparent strength of the working class during the uncertain times immediately following independence soon faded. It is clear that the "little Czech man" did not have much control over his political and economic destiny. Organised protest had its occasional successes: the miners' strikes of 1921 and 1922 were in part instrumental in securing them superior social benefits, whilst intense lobbying from officials and zřizenci helped to prevent the unification of social

insurance laws. Even small entrepreneurs were apparently successful in securing a ban on "One-price stores" in 1933, although in practice this did not prevent the further expansion of firms such as Baťa<sup>79</sup>. The ordinary citizen had little real power, although society was sufficiently open to allow some talented individuals to rise through the system.

## VI Politics and class

Amongst the eight political parties whose programmes have been analysed in chapter three above, no fewer than four identified very closely with one particular social group, which they tried to present as a redeeming force for the whole of society. Both the peasant community and small tradesmen had their own self-styled representatives, whilst the manual worker could choose between the Social Democratic Workers' Party, which sought to achieve its socialist aims within the system, and the Communist Party, which envisaged revolution as a necessary prelude to social change. Only officials had no party of their own, and the attempt to found a party specifically for intellectuals came to grief in the 1925 elections. However, although there was apparently a considerable degree of correlation between political ideology and the multifaceted social structure of inter-war Czechoslovakia, social background was not the only determinant of political behaviour. Nationalism and religion were both potent forces, whilst for the desperate, especially in Slovakia, political choice might be determined by the

hope for a job, or some far cruder bribe<sup>80</sup>. The analysis of voting patterns remains, nonetheless, a useful indicator of the significance of class in Czech and Slovak society.

The Agrarian Party was the government party which had the most evenly distributed support throughout the Czechoslovak Republic. It consistently attracted a high percentage of the rural vote - in 1929, for example, it won over one million of the five and a quarter million votes cast in villages and towns with less than 5000 inhabitants<sup>81</sup>. To some extent the Agrarian Party's success can be attributed to its strong organisational network; it was associated with cooperatives, credit institutions and agricultural societies, as well as numerous social and cultural activities in rural areas<sup>82</sup>. Party membership might be a matter of "enlightened self-interest" for the peasant farmer; however, as the National Socialists reluctantly conceded in their programme of 1931, "estate consciousness" often led even the smallholder and the agricultural labourer to vote for the Agrarians<sup>83</sup>.

The success of the Czech Populist Party in strongly Catholic Moravia, where it attracted a relative majority of the votes cast in the parliamentary elections of 1925, 1929 and 1935, showed the continuing importance of religion as a focus of identification. Populist support was particularly strong in rural areas; in 1925, for example, the party won 368,900 votes in rural communities

in Moravia, far more even than the Agrarian Party, but only 68,180 votes in towns with more than 5000 inhabitants. The Populist Party was also an important competitor for the rural vote in Bohemia, but in the more secular atmosphere of the Western province, the Agrarians had no difficulty in maintaining their lead<sup>84</sup>.

The Tradesmen's Party, which was founded after independence, grew to be an important pressure group for the small entrepreneur in rural areas. It was very distinctly the party of the country tradesman, winning more than twice as many votes in small communities with less than 5000 inhabitants as in the larger towns<sup>85</sup>. The effects of the Depression are obvious in the sudden upsurge of support in 1935, when the Tradesmen won over thirty-eight per cent more votes than they had in the previous election of 1929. Their anti-capitalist policies took on a new meaning during a period when many small businesses were forced into bankruptcy.

The upper business and commercial strata tended to support the National Democratic Party. This party never achieved much success outside its original base in Bohemia, and it was particularly strong in Prague, the economic as well as the political centre of the Republic. The National Democrats won over 109,000 votes in the capital in 1920, more than twenty-five per cent of their total support, and they were always far more popular in towns than in villages and small communities<sup>86</sup>. The party lost ground steadily in the 1920s, as nationalism grew less significant for the Czechs. However, in 1935, in a coalition

with the Czech fascists, as the "National Union", it had a notable success in Prague, where it topped the poll with 142,100 votes, twenty eight per cent of the total<sup>†</sup>. In the same election, the Národní sjednocení won fifteen per cent of the votes in Plzeň, the second industrial town in Bohemia, whereas in rural districts with less than 5000 population, it nowhere won more than five per cent of the total vote<sup>87</sup>.

The National Socialist Party had first emerged in 1897 as an explicitly patriotic, evolutionary, alternative to Marxism. Like the National Democrats, the party was strongest in Bohemia, where it actually captured a relative majority of the votes cast in 1929. Its organisational base drew considerable strength from the rail, postal and white-collar unions - its appeal to officials being underlined by its strength in Prague, where it captured 117,310 votes in 1929 and 107,200 in 1935. Numerically, the total National Socialist vote was split fairly evenly between the larger towns and smaller communities with less than 5000 inhabitants, although the latter accounted for more than seventy per cent of the total population. It can, therefore, be considered an urban-based party, reflecting the support it drew from salaried employees and skilled workers<sup>88</sup>.

<sup>†</sup> Jan Havránek claims that Národní sjednocení won only fifteen per cent of the votes in Prague in 1935, but he is presumably referring to the whole Prague constituency, which, apart from the capital, was largely rural, and an Agrarian stronghold. 89



In 1920, the Social Democrats won over one and a half million votes, almost twice as many as their nearest rivals, the Agrarian Party. In Slovakia, in particular, they received overwhelming support, a reflection of continuing political turbulence only ten months after the Hungarian Red Army had been forced to retreat. The split with the party's left wing in the autumn of 1920 left it considerably weakened, its vote lagged behind that of the Communists in 1925, and it did not exceed one million votes again until 1935. Votes cast for the Social Democratic Party tended to reflect the overall distribution of the population between villages and small towns, and larger urban areas<sup>90</sup>. Although the party did have some success in recruiting agricultural labourers, to the considerable indignation of Agrarian intellectuals like Josef Holeček, its success in rural areas probably reflected rather the considerable industrialisation in quite small communities<sup>91</sup>. The Social Democrats were regularly the largest party in Plzeň, and they won 68,100 votes in Prague in 1929, and 77,770 in 1935, when they came third behind Národní sjednocení and the National Socialists<sup>92</sup>.

Analysis of the Communist vote is particularly significant, since in the 1920s the party became more extreme in its emphasis on the revolutionary nature of its creed. When the Communists split away from the Social Democrats in 1920, they took with them a majority of both party members and voters. In 1925, the party achieved 13.2% of the total vote in Czechoslovakia, second only to the Agrarians, who won 13.7%. Internal struggles for control of the party leadership, and repeated purges, took their

toll, however. In 1929 there was a distinct fall in popular support and, despite the Depression, the party's share of the total vote went up by only 0.1% between 1929 and 1935<sup>93</sup>.

The fact that the Communist Party, which pictured the industrial working class as the vanguard of the proletariat, actually drew so much of its support from villages and small towns has been the subject of much comment<sup>94</sup>. In 1935, for example, 551,400 of the party's votes came from such communities, and only 298,100 from urban centres with more than 5000 inhabitants<sup>95</sup>. In fact, the Social Democrats, too, always had much stronger numerical support in the smaller communities, in which over 70% of the Czechoslovak population lived, than in urban areas. It should not be forgotten that many villages were industrialised, and that many village inhabitants actually commuted into the towns to industrial jobs. This is not to deny that the Communist vote was particularly strong in South Slovakia, where the party acted as a focus of discontent for the largely Hungarian minority, and in Ruthenia, where it drew similar support from the backward and underprivileged agricultural population. However, the Communists also had some important bastions of urban support. They always won a particularly high share of the vote in "Red" Kladno, and they were also strong in Prague, Moravská Ostrava and Mladá Boleslav, to give three instances of industrial towns where they consistently won more than 10% of the total votes cast in parliamentary elections<sup>96</sup>. Perhaps the most balanced verdict on the Communist Party comes from Joseph Rothschild:

The Communist Party drew its sustained strength less from any unbearable conditions of exploitation, than from a generalised complex of alienations that reflected rigid social barriers between the working class and the lower middle class, and estrangements between juxtaposed ethnic communities. 97

The Slovak Populists, like the Communists, were a party of opposition, except for a brief period from 1927 to 1929, when they provided two ministers to the government coalition. Dissatisfied with both Czech centralism and Czech secularism, the party sought to defend what it saw as Slovakia's traditional Catholic values, and was very strongly nationalistic. Except in 1920, when the Slovak Populists came second to the Social Democratic Party, they were consistently the most popular party in Slovakia. Even though they never had a clear majority, they always polled far more votes than their nearest rivals, the Agrarian Party. They were, predictably, very strong in rural areas, where the village priest was usually a strong supporter of the party; they won about one third of the Slovak country vote in 1935. Their share of the urban vote in that year, at just over twenty per cent, was slightly smaller than that of the Social Democrats. However, Slovakia had comparatively few towns with more than 5000 people<sup>98</sup>.

Although the secret ballot made detailed social analysis of the inter-war election results impossible, it is clear that there was a definite relationship between voting patterns and the basic social groups which have been identified in Czech and Slovak society. Party constit-

uencies often overlapped, and for many of the electorate, nationalism or religion provided an overriding focus of political loyalty. Nonetheless, it would seem that a distinct peasant identity was reflected, to an extent, in support for the two Catholic parties, as well as in the large proportion of the agricultural vote which went to the Agrarian Party. The small entrepreneur from rural and semi-rural communities was far more likely to vote for the Tradesmen's Party than his urban counterpart, who tended to join the upper strata of business and commerce in their support for the National Democrats. Officials were harder to categorise, as they voted for all parties, with the possible exception of the Tradesmen's Party. The socialist or communist intellectual was a common figure, and the business and financial interests of the Agrarian Party meant that it, too, could attract support outside its obvious constituency. The vast majority of the working class voted for one of the three socialist parties, although the two non-revolutionary parties together won far more support than the Communists. Indeed, it was the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party which was the most obvious beneficiary of the Depression, although the Communists' failure to increase their share of the vote can be explained by the fact that they lost some of their German voters to the Sudetendeutsche Partei<sup>99</sup>.

The overall impression of the Czechs is of a society in which class was an important, if not overriding factor in influencing voting patterns. The situation in Slovakia was somewhat different, for Slovak society was less devel-

**Table 8:      Parliamentary elections**<sup>100</sup>

	Bohemia	Moravia	Slovakia
<b>Agrarians</b>			
1920	424,236	179,382	242,045
1925	488,267	199,721	248,034
1929	524,578	224,522	278,979
1935	541,543	287,567	286,739
<b>Tradesmen</b>			
1920	80,757	42,056	-
1925	194,162	80,320	11,576
1929	176,188	77,539	30,134
1935	274,671	122,703	41,996
<b>Populists</b>			
1920	191,844	272,495	-
1925	269,756	366,905	18,036
1929	255,877	321,936	36,548
1935	255,494	315,567	37,489
<b>Nat. Dems.</b>			
1920	298,054	89,498	-
1925	213,843	42,730	24,954
1929	200,995	56,198	53,745
1935*	323,918	77,995	25,490
<b>Nat. Socs.</b>			
1920	381,367	89,498	29,564
1925	435,761	120,909	36,909
1929	535,740	177,595	43,968
1935	494,480	198,197	51,930
<b>Soc. Dems.</b>			
1920	762,092	318,087	510,341
1925	386,440	166,145	60,635
1929	535,740	269,674	135,506
1935	551,579	269,089	184,389
<b>Communists</b>			
1920	-	-	-
1925	471,631	195,174	198,467
1929	398,260	162,136	152,242
1935	384,750	174,574	210,785
<b>Slovak Pops.</b>			
1920	-	-	235,389
1925	-	-	489,111
1929	962	20,406	403,683
1935	-	28,588	489,641

\* As a coalition, the Národní sjednocení

N.B. This table does not include results for the minor parties, or the parties of the national minorities.

oped, and the majority of the electorate was politically immature and inexperienced. Both religion and nationalism were enormously important as focuses of identification, and they were combined in support for the Slovak Populist Party. The only other parties to win significant support were the Agrarians, for obvious reasons in a largely agricultural country, the Social Democrats, and the Communists, and the latter attracted many of their votes from the Hungarian minority. Although the majority of the electorate in the Czech Lands seem to have wished to achieve their aims through the existing political system, it is clear that a large proportion of Slovaks were in some way dissatisfied with the status quo.

## VII Conclusion

Available evidence of demonstrable inequalities in such matters as income and housing make it clear that lifestyles in inter-war Czechoslovakia were very closely linked to occupation. Birth was often the most decisive factor governing life chances, especially for the child of a poor peasant or an agricultural labourer. Nonetheless, education could provide a stepping stone to the very highest places in Czech and Slovak society, and the inter-war republic has been described as "a paradise for the Ph.D."<sup>101</sup> Yet it is true that the most notable examples of "poor boys made good" - the first President of the Republic, Tomáš Masaryk, who did rise through education, and the multi-millionaire, Tomáš Baťa, who prided himself on the fact that he had only a basic education - had both risen to prominence before independence. Perhaps

the twenty years between the two world wars was not long enough to provide equivalent case histories. However, it would also seem that the intelligentsia and the business and commercial strata, once established, had some success in replicating themselves<sup>102</sup>.

Nationalism was the single most important source of internal conflict in inter-war Czechoslovakia, often subsuming other issues, such as the fact that the German areas of the Republic were particularly hard hit by the Depression, or that Slovakia was economically backward in comparison to the Czech Lands. Voting patterns illustrate that, of the social differences within Czech and Slovak society, the division between town and country was significant; there were also distinct lines of division, in terms of life style, between the working class and salaried employees, and between a lower stratum of the particularly underprivileged and the rest of society. However, after the turbulence of the first two or three years of independence had been overcome, there was never any real suggestion that the Republic would be torn apart by social strife.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Chapter 2, p. 67-70, 77-79.
2. Jan Mertl, "K otázce společenských tříd" in Naše Doba, xxxiv (1926), p. 27.
3. Chapter 3, p. 110, chapter 5, p. 199-200.
4. Chapter 5, p. 214, 217.
5. Hospodárske dejiny Československa (Bratislava, 1974), p.202-203.
6. Ferdinand Peroutka, Budování státu, vol. 3 (Prague, 1936), p. 1643.
7. See Marwick, Class..., p. 193.
8. Antonín Chyba, Hospodářský vývoj a postavení pracujících v buržoazní CSR (Prague, 1973), p. 27.
9. Jaroslav Krejčí, Social Change and Stratification in Postwar Czechoslovakia (London, 1972) p. 63. Jacques Rupnik, in Histoire du parti communiste tchécoslovaque des origines a la prise du pouvoir (Paris, 1981), p. 92 gives the following comparison of real wages: (1929 = 100) Real wages: 1927 = 90.9, 1937 = 77.3; Real wages without counting the unemployed: 1927 = 91.5, 1937 = 90.8.
10. Antonín Chyba, Postavení dělnické třídy v kapitalistickém Československu (Prague, 1961), p. 75; Sociální revue, vi (1925), p. 353.
11. Hospodárské..., p. 582; Marko Weirich, Staré a nové Československa (Prague, 1938-1939), p. 54.
12. See chapter 5, p. 212, 199-200, chapter 3, p. 110.
13. Hospodárské..., p. 203-204; see also Statistická příručka republiky Československé, vol. 4 (Prague, 1932), p. 416-417.
14. Hospodárské..., p. 217-218, footnote 15; Alice Teichová, "O výdělečné činnosti členů poslanecké sněmovny ve volebním období 1929-1935" in ČSČH, iii, (1955), p. 127.
15. Statistická ..., p. 417. See table 4.
16. Chapter 5, p. 215 and footnote 103.
17. Arthur Marwick, Class..., p. 193.
18. Československá statistika, vol.152, series xix (Prague, 1937), p. 6.
19. Ibid., p. 9; Chyba, Postavení..., p. 185.



20. M. Čásková, H. Pelc and M.P. Rieglová, "Pokus o stanovení typu normální stravy pro dělnickou rodinu", in Sociální problémy, v (1937), p. 37.
21. Chyba, Postavení..., p. 88, 90; Hospodárske..., p. 216; see also chapter 5, p. 189.
22. See chapter 2, p. 67; Fyžen Štern, "Kritický rozbor péče o nezaměstnané v Československu" in Sociální revue, xiii (1932), p. 21.
23. Jaromír Nečas, Nezaměstnanost a podpůrná péče v Československu (Prague, 1938), p. 3, 5, 10; Jaroslav Janko, O nezaměstnanosti v Československu (Prague, 1926), p. 31-33.
24. Archive of Charles University, Detvan 1933-1934, čís. 4/Pohronice/1.
25. Chyba, Postavení..., p.91; see also Pavel Horvath, Príručka hospodárskej štatistiky Slovenska (Bratislava, 1935), p. 196.
26. LAMS 42 IV 5. Anton Štefánek's research into Slovak agricultural labourers in the Czech Lands revealed that in some districts Slovak čeledi earned about ten per cent less than their Czech counterparts.
27. František Fajfr, "Nivelisace dnešní společnosti" in Čin, vi (1934), p. 1013 claimed that the number of self-employed persons earning less than 15,000 crowns a year went up by over forty per cent between 1921 and 1930.
28. "Glossy o pražské společnosti" in Přítomnost, i (1924), p. 673.
29. Michel, Banques..., p. 328. In 1924 Preiss bought a small piece of land at Orlík from Prince Schwarzenberg, and built himself a wooden cottage.
30. Karel Kratochvíl, Bankéři (Prague, 1962), p. 242.
31. František Charvát, Jiří Linhart and Jiří Večerník, Sociálně třídní struktura Československa (Prague, 1978), p. 38; Stará dělnická Praha (Prague, 1981), p. 261; F.W. Carter, "CKD Employees, Prague 1871-1920: Some Aspects of Their Geographical Distribution" in Journal of Historical Geography, i (1975), p. 86; Daniel Okálí, "Bieda na Dornkappli a Podhradí" in Nová Bratislava, i (1931), p. 29.
32. Otakar Machotka, Sociálně potřebné..., p. 30; M. Nečasová-Poubová, "Školní prospěch dítěte a jeho sociální poměry" in Sociální revue, x (1929), p. 33, 35.
33. Ilja Marko, Dornkappel..., passim; Vanda Tůmanová, Pražské nouzové kolonie (Prague, 1971); Okálí, op.cit.

34. Sčítání bytů ve větších městech republiky Československé ze dne 15 února 1921 (Prague, 1929), p. 26; Sčítání bytů ve větších městech republiky Československé ze dne 1 prosince 1930 (Prague, 1935), p. 50-51, 152.
35. Sčítání bytů...1930, p. 155.
36. Ibid., p. 160.
37. František Kalesný, "Materiálové príspevky: poznatky z národopisného výskumu robotníkov v Bratislave" in Muzeum, xiv (1976), p. 185-186.
38. Machotka, Sociálne potrebné..., p. 297
39. Nečasová-Poubová, "Školní...", p. 129-130.
40. Machotka. op.cit., p. 297-299.
41. Ján Rob Poničan, "Skutočnosť u nás najskutočnejšia: podzemné byty proletárov v Senci" in DAV, iv (1931), p. 13.
42. Francis Stuermer, "Education in a Democracy" in Robert Kerner, ed., Czechoslovakia, Twenty Years of Independence (Berkeley, 1940), p. 303.
43. Jaroslav Kopáč, Dějiny školství a pedagogiky v Československu, vol. 1 (Brno, 1971), p. 20.
44. Michal Faltin, Sociografia dediny, sociologický výzkum Svinny pod Hradom v Žilinskom okrese. Ph.D. thesis, Komenský university, Bratislava, 1942, p. 147.
45. Ladislav Koubek, ed., Sociologický výzkum žactva měštanských škol ve školním roce 1929-1930 (Prague, 1931) p. 7.
46. Jan Doležal and Zdeněk Ullrich, "Výzkum abiturientů českých středních škol v zemi České a Moravsko-slezské ve školním roce 1933/34" in Statistický obzor, xvi (1935), p. 201.
47. E Čapek, Stav školství a reforma (Prague, 1947) p. 40-72.
48. Doležal and Ullrich, op.cit., p. 198.
49. Dobroslav Krejčí, Sociální poměry studentstva českých vysokých škol brněnských (Prague, 1924) p. 78-79.
50. Horváth, Priručka..., p. 185.
51. SŠÚA. Anton Štefánek, Inv. 648, III2, Karton 10.
52. Doležal and Ullrich, op.cit., p. 201.

53. Information compiled by the author from Miroslav Buchválek, ed., Dějiny Československa v datech (Prague, 1968); Československo (Prague 1936-1941);, Kulturní adresář ČSR (Prague, 1934); František Sekanina, ed., Album representů všech oborů veřejného života československého (Prague, 1927).
54. Almanach československého branné moci a četnictva (Prague, 1920), p. 142-6; see also footnote 53 above.
55. Jonathan Zorach, The Czechoslovak Army, 1918-1938. Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1975, p. 105.
56. V. Gutwirth, "Intelektuálové a strany" in Přítomnost, xi (1934), p. 166; see also footnote 53.
57. Jan Mertl, Byrokracie (Prague, 1937), p. 197.
58. See footnote 53.
59. Quoted in Richard Wagner, Pánství kapitalistických monopolů v Československu (Prague, 1958), p. 97.
60. Kurt Witt, Wirtschaftskräfte und Wirtschaftspolitik der Tschechoslowakei (Leipzig, 1936), quoted in Hájda, A Study..., p. 92.
61. Alice Teichová, An Economic Background to Munich; International Business and Czechoslovakia, 1918-1938 (Cambridge, 1974), p. 41-45, 195.
62. Wagner, op.cit., p. 98; Michel, Banques..., p. 323-324; see also footnote 53.
63. See footnote 53.
64. Amongst them, Jaroslav Preiss, Joe Hartmann and the Barton-Dobeníns.
65. Campbell, "The Castle...".
66. Alice Teichová, "O výdělečných...", p. 112-113.
67. Teichová, An economic..., p. 205-206.
68. Mamatey and Luža, A History..., p. 127, 130, 147.
69. Edward Taborský, Czechoslovak Democracy at Work (London, 1945), p.37-8, 8; Josef Macek, Parlament zevnitř (Prague, 1932); see also footnote 53.
70. As, for example, over social insurance legislation; see, for example, Jan Mertl, "Naše péče o nezaměstnané" in Sociální problémy, iii (1933-1934), p. 7.
71. For example, positions in cooperatives controlled by the parties.
72. Právo lidu, 12 March 1921, p. 1-2; Václav Walzel,

History of Czechoslovak Trade Unionism (New York, 1952), p. 64-65.

75. Miloslav Volf, Naše dělnické hnutí v minulosti (Prague, 1947), p. 243-254.
76. Leonard Bianchi, Dejiny státu a práva, vol. 2 (Bratislava, 1973), p. 343-344. The period of probation lasted two years, every three months the "aspirant" received a "contribution" of between 270 and 660 Kč.
77. Volf, op.cit., p. 242. The National Democrats' leader, Kramář, owned textile factories in North Bohemia. See also Jan Křen, "K počátkům českých žlutých odborů" in Příspěvky k dějinám KSČ, ix (1959), p. 73-93; x (1960), p. 107-126.
78. Alois Rozehnal, Odborové hnutí v Československé republice (New York, 1953), p. 30, 39.
79. See chapter 3, p. 108 and footnote 77.
80. Amongst the apocryphal stories which I have heard about Slovak election practice is one of a village where the Agrarians handed out one shoe to peasants before the election, and the other shoe after a satisfactory result was obtained. See also chapter 5, p. 206-207.
81. F. Čapek, Politická příručka ČSR; sociologická studie (Prague, 1931), p. 83.
82. Mary Hrabik Samal, "Party Organization as a Crucial Variable in the Growth or Loss of Supporters. The Case of the Republican Party in Inter-war Czechoslovakia" in Karl Bosl, ed., Die erste tschechoslowakische Republik als multinationaler Partei-staat (Munich, 1979), p. 377-402.
83. Ibid., p. 379; Nat.Soc. 1931, p. 164.
84. Čapek, op.cit., p. 82-83, 97-98.
85. Ibid., p. 93.
86. Op.cit., p. 91-92.
87. E. Čapek, Lesk a bída politických stran; volby 19 května 1935 (Prague, 1937), p. 10. Figures have also been checked in the official publication Elections à la chambre des députés faites en mai 1935 (Prague, 1936), p. 18 and 14-15.
88. Čapek, Politická..., p. 118-119, and Elections..., p. 14-15.
89. Jan Havránek, "Fascism in Czechoslovakia" in Peter Sugar, ed., Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918-1945 (Santa Barbara, 1971), p. 50.

90. Čapek, Politická..., p. 112-114.
91. See chapter 4, p. 147 for Holeček's comments and chapter 1, p. 15-16 for a discussion of the industrialisation of small communities.
92. Čapek, Politická..., p. 114; Lesk..., p. 14; Elections..., p. 14-15.
93. Čapek, Politická..., p. 161; Joseph Rothschild, East Central Europe Between the Wars (Seattle, 1974), p. 116, 126. Of course, the Communist Party was the only party under consideration here to recruit from the sizeable German minority, and it undoubtedly lost some ground to the Henlein Party; see also Čapek, Lesk..., p. 8.
94. See, for example, Zdeněk Suda, Zealots and Rebels, a History of the Ruling Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Stanford, 1980), p. 83-93.
95. Čapek, Lesk..., p. 14.
96. Suda, op.cit., p. 83-84.
97. Rothschild, op.cit., p. 98.
98. Čapek, Politická..., p. 101, 103; Lesk..., p. 16-17.
99. See table 8, p. 272.
100. Manual statistique de la république tchécoslovaque, vol. 2 (Prague, 1925), p. 344-345; Manuel statistique de la république tchécoslovaque, vol. 4 (Prague, 1932), p. 401-402, 404; Annuaire statistique (Prague, 1936), p. 269.
101. Francis Stuermer, "Education...", p. 313.  
251 and
102. See p./258 above. Owen Johnson noted in his thesis (Socio-cultural..., p. 260) that although initial recruitment to secondary schools in Slovakia came from the children of the peasantry, the percentage of peasant and shopkeeper children started almost immediately to decline. There was a noticeable growth in the percentage of children who were the offspring of bureaucrats, teachers and members of the professions.

## Conclusion

Czechoslovakia - and this is primarily true for Bohemia and Moravia - has been frequently described as the classic country of the "little man", i.e. a country of hardworking, labor-loving, thrifty individuals, who love their families, and privacy, and take pride in craftsmanship.

(Jan Hajda, Czech-American sociologist, 1955) 1

Perhaps the strongest impression to be gained of inter-war Czechoslovak society from the various types of source material analysed in this thesis is of a people who identified closely with the image of the "little man". This image was particularly well-expressed by the Agrarian politician, Antonín Švehla: "The great majority of our nation is made up of little poor people, small and medium peasant farmers and industrial workers... small tradesmen, artisans and shopkeepers, officials and members of the liberal professions"<sup>2</sup>. The definition is, of course, platitudinous - it reveals little about Czechoslovak, as opposed to any other advanced society, for one would expect wealthy businessmen and landowners to be in a minority. The only striking point is the use of the epithet "little poor people" to describe members of the liberal professions<sup>3</sup>. Yet the notion of Czechoslovakia as the "country of the little man" has been propagated by both contemporaries and historians alike, not as a commonplace, but rather as a unique and essential truth about the nature of inter-war society<sup>4</sup>.

There was a certain element of political rhetoric in the appeal to the "little man". Political leaders, particularly in the early years of the Republic, needed to encourage a sense of identification with the state amongst the peasantry and the industrial working class, both of whom had become much more aware of their potential strength as a result of the War<sup>5</sup>. Politicians were often ready to identify personally with the broad masses of the population; Švehla, for example, claimed to be a "peasant", and Masaryk told Prague workers in April 1919, "You know I was myself a worker, and I have not ceased to be a worker", adding tellingly, "I am convinced that the maturity of our labour force guarantees progress in our Republic"<sup>6</sup>. Masarykian philosophy, with its emphasis on the dignity of labour and the value of each individual to the community, however lowly his occupation, tended to promote political and social stability<sup>7</sup>. Likewise the concept of the "little man", a social hero who was not identifiable with any one specific class or occupational group, encouraged harmony in Czechoslovak society.

However, identification with the "little man" was more than a convenient political device; it also revealed a narrow and somewhat anachronistic conception of national society. Until independence, the Czechs had been dominated both economically and politically by Vienna, whilst the Slovaks occupied a particularly subservient position in Transleithania. The period between the wars was one of state building, during which new economic and political

elites came to the fore. Leading politicians were household names, but since many of them had risen from quite humble backgrounds - Masaryk was the son of a coachman and Beneš the son of a peasant farmer - they could still be identified as "little men". The existence of rich industrialists and financiers or of nascent business dynasties, amongst the Czechs in particular, had little impact at all on social perceptions. Industrialists in novels continued to bear German or Jewish names like Pressinger and Bondy; big business was seen as an alien force or, more often, overlooked completely<sup>8</sup>.

Tomáš Baťa was the only Czech businessman to capture the public imagination<sup>9</sup>. This was due not merely to his financial success, but also to his consummate skill as a self-publicist. His carefully cultivated image as a self-made man, who fostered a spirit of egalitarianism in work relations, appealed to the meritocratic ideals of the Czechs<sup>10</sup>.

In most countries industrialists and financiers are fairly anonymous figures, but there is a basic awareness of the existence of an upper class of wealth. In inter-war Czechoslovakia, even journalists and political commentators often seem to have been remarkably unaware that there was a sizeable native economic bourgeoisie<sup>11</sup>. Few Czech or Slovak families had been prominent for more than one or two generations, and in the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire they had formed no more than provincial elites. Independence created enormous career opportunities for the Czechs and, to a lesser extent, the



Slovaks and the immediate post-war period brought rapid social mobility for many people. Twenty years of independence was too short a period for the emerging national elites to develop fully the ethos of an upper class, or to establish themselves as such in social perceptions. Moreover, the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy had provided a model of "true" exclusive Society, and its abolition in Czechoslovakia in 1918 was felt to have removed "the highlands of caste"<sup>12</sup>.

Commentators in the inter-war period were proud of the "democratic" nature of the Czechoslovak social order. Jaromír John, writing about Prague Society in the early 1930s, claimed:

With the exception of contemporary Russia, one would probably search in vain for a society as unified and democratically homogeneous as that of the Czechs. <sup>13</sup>

Yet the fact that Czechoslovak Society lacked the social polish, and sometimes the wealth, of an established upper class was a cause for some concern. John, for example, was aware that foreign diplomats often preferred the company of the German ex-aristocracy to that of the less mondaine Czech and Slovak elites<sup>14</sup>. The much-vaunted image of Czechoslovakia as a country of the "little man" was to prove a political disadvantage in the long term. On the eve of Munich a reporter was told by Joseph Addison, the British Minister in Prague, that he had no Czech friends "because they eat in the kitchen"<sup>15</sup>. Such attitudes, which Addison had no hesitation in conveying in his reports to the Foreign Office, undoubt-

edly made it much easier psychologically to betray Czechoslovakia at Munich<sup>16</sup>.

The highest-placed group in Czechoslovak society to be readily identified by contemporaries was "officials" - not, of course, the private secretaries to government ministers, but rather minor civil servants, grammar-school teachers and low-ranking officers. Although top civil servants received high salaries, "officials" were normally pictured as badly-paid<sup>17</sup>. The effect of wartime inflation had been to depress the living standards of this group, and the necessity of maintaining a basic minimum for the most lowly-placed of them had also led to a certain equalisation of salaries<sup>18</sup>. This phenomenon was not confined to Czechoslovakia and, as in neighbouring Germany, "officials" were therefore anxious to preserve their separate social status, especially in pension and employment provisions<sup>19</sup>. The suggestion of social levelling was, however, never really borne out in the inter-war period; "officials", who had normally been educated at least to the level of the maturita, continued to be identified colloquially as "gentlemen"<sup>20</sup>.

Beneath them came zřizenci, lower-ranking non-manual workers, a social group which had increased in numbers rapidly as a result of economic changes from the 1890s onwards<sup>21</sup>. Their status as "employees in higher service" was confirmed by the Social Insurance Acts of the 1920s, and the favourable treatment afforded by social and employment legislation provided an institutionalised

basis for their sense of separate identity<sup>22</sup>. Their life chances, in terms of income, housing and educational opportunity, were greater than those of manual workers<sup>23</sup>. However, they were still likely to be classed colloquially amongst the "common people"<sup>24</sup>.

The two traditional groups in society, peasant farmers and small entrepreneurs, were regarded with much sentimental attachment, though it is clear that these occupations were awarded a fairly low social status when compared to jobs which required the completion of a grammar school or a university education. Both of these groups tended to criticise the prestige accorded to formal educational achievements, which their members usually lacked<sup>25</sup>. Each, in their different ways, was opposed to the forces of modernisation; the small entrepreneur feared the competition of big business, whilst many peasants regarded urban society with deep suspicion.

Although it was far from homogeneous, the working class was the only social group commonly referred to as a class by contemporaries. Differences in levels of skill formed the basis for divisions of interest which cut across the unity of the class, and there were further distinctions between agricultural and industrial labour and between those employed in large-scale concerns and those in small workshops<sup>26</sup>. Nonetheless, many manual workers, especially in industry, do seem to have shared a certain common social identity. Social and employment legislation marked them off from white-collar employees, and also

largely ignored the distinctions between the skilled, the semi-skilled and the unskilled<sup>27</sup>. There was, however, a loosely-defined "underclass" composed of casual workers and certain categories of unskilled labour who did not share fully in the benefits conferred by such legislation<sup>28</sup>. They were regarded by the Communist Party and sociologists alike as potential revolutionaries<sup>29</sup>.

The social groups outlined above were basically occupational categories, which were distinguished by the census and party political programmes, and were readily accepted as social stereotypes. The Czechs and the Slovaks of the First Republic do not seem to have had a very clear sense of "class". They did perceive the existence of a "working class", but not of a cohesive middle class; the three groups distinguished (officials, peasants and small tradesmen) suggest the lingering influence of pre-industrial estate society.

The most significant divisions which appear to have influenced social perceptions in the inter-war period were dichotomous - the distinction between town and country, manual and non-manual labour and the educated and the uneducated - and all cut across the more obvious barriers of class<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, rank consciousness, which was particularly strong amongst white-collar employees, was antithetical to the formation of all-inclusive social classes<sup>31</sup>. The structure of Czech and, more particularly, Slovak society was still far removed from that of an advanced capitalist country like Great Britain<sup>32</sup>.

It is clear that the socio-economic inheritance of the Habsburg past continued to counterbalance the forces of change in the Republic to a considerable extent. If the převrat of 1918 did lead to far more than simply a change of personnel in the highest ranks of society, this was at least in part due to the social effects of the War<sup>33</sup>. In the words of Karel Čapek, "Was the coup of 28th October also a revolution? It was, but only a minor revolution"<sup>34</sup>. Land reform and a series of legislative measures to improve employment conditions and social insurance provisions raised the quality of life for large sectors of the community. The transformation of the Slovak educational system ensured the rise of a numerous consciously-Slovak educated stratum<sup>35</sup>. However, conservative and traditional attitudes prevented a truly radical alteration of the social structure. Czechoslovakia had no outstanding claim amongst the industrial countries of this time to be considered a state for the "little man". In its early years it instituted a number of much-needed reforms; thereafter, it became the cautious Republic of a cautious people, who retained many attitudes from Habsburg times.

# NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Jan Hajda,<sup>ed</sup> A Study of Contemporary Czechoslovakia (Chicago, 1955), p. 86.
2. Quoted in Idea československého státu, vol. 1 (Prague, 1936), p. 232.
3. The quotation was taken from an interview with Karel Čapek, and Švehla was doubtless carried away by the force of rhetoric in his description of members of the liberal professions as "poor". However he was deliberate in including them as "little people", for in the same interview he described the Czechs as a whole as a nation of "common people". See chapter 1, footnotes 8 and 115.
4. See, for example, Mamatey and Luža, A History..., p. 44-45.
5. See chapter 1, p. 32, 34.
6. See chapter 1, p. 41 and footnote 111; for Masaryk's speech see Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Cesta demokracie, soubor projevů za republiky, vol. 1, 1918-1920 (Prague, 1933), p. 116. Similar speeches were made on four other occasions in 1919 and 1920; *ibid*, p. 133, 181, 186, 407.
7. See chapter 5, p. 207-208.
8. Pressinger was the industrialist in Benjamin Klička's novel Brody (Prague, 1926), G.H. Bondy appears in Čapek's Tovarna na absolutno (Prague, 1922). See also chapter 3, p. 117.
9. Baťa featured in Marie Pujmanová's novel Lidé na křižovatce (Prague, 1937), in the shape of the textile baron Kazmar this name, significantly, is not typically Czech. He also appeared in the unlikely guise of an angel in František Langer's play Andělé mezi námi (Prague, 1931). References to Baťa also abound in the popular press of this period.
10. See, for example, Thomas Baťa, How I began (Batanagar, 1941), which is a translation of an earlier Czech work.
11. See chapter 3, p. 117 and chapter 5, p. 214.
12. See chapter 5, p. 212, and B. Markolous (pseud.), "Kluby a jejich anglická tradice" in Magazin dp, iii (1933), p. 107.
13. *Ibid*, p. 107.
14. *Op.cit.*, p. 176-177.
15. Quoted in Sheila Grant Duff, The Parting of Ways (London, 1982), p. 127.

16. Several quotations from Addison's reports are given in Campbell, Confrontation..., p. 247.
17. See, for example, chapter 3, p. 110-111 and chapter 5, p. 200.
18. See chapter 1, p. 29.
19. See Jürgen Kocka, "The First World War and the "Mittelstand": German Artisans and White-Collar Workers" in Contemporary History, viii (1973), p. 108-110; also chapter 5, p. 196-198.
20. See chapter 5, p. 182.
21. See chapter 2, p. 56.
22. See chapter 2, p. <sup>56,</sup> 67-69, 72-76
23. See chapter 6, p. 239, 245-247, 251.
24. See chapter 5, p. 199.
25. See chapter 3, p. 111-112.
26. See chapter 5, p. 201-202, chapter 3, p. 113-114.
27. See chapter 2, especially p. 68.
28. See chapter 2, p. 77-79.
29. See chapter 3, p. 113-114 and chapter 4, p. 155.
30. My working hypothesis about the nature of class is given in the Introduction, on p. 3.
31. See chapter 5, p. 199.
32. For a description of British society at this time see Marwick, Class..., passim.
33. See chapter 1, p. 32, 34.
34. Karel Čapek, Na břehu dnů, 2nd ed., (Prague, 1978), p. 255.
35. See chapter 1, p. 31-35.

Appendix 1Jan Hajda's view of the composition of social classes in Czechoslovakia in 1930.+

Social class	Percentage of population	Social categories included in the class
Upper	.85%	<p>A. The Plurocracy: farmers with 100 hectares and more; entrepreneurs; owners of banks and insurance companies; owners of private transportation, publishing houses, hotels, hospitals, clinics, spas, restaurants, theatres and similar establishments, all with 51 employees and more.</p> <p>B. The Intellectual Stratum (members of liberal professions): leading politicians, university profs., physicians, clergymen, lawyers, artists, writers, journalists, composers, musicians, architects.</p> <p>C. The Bureaucratic Stratum: higher government officials and administrators, top group of army and police officers, directors of state plants with more than 51 employees, general managers of private enterprises with 250 employees or more.</p>
Upper-middle	5.79%	<p>A. The Propertied Upper-middle Class: farmers with 30 but less than 100 hectares, entrepreneurs and owners of establishments as above with 11 to 50 employees.</p> <p>B. The Intellectual Stratum (members of the liberal professions): less prominent members of the same categories mentioned above, gymnasium and special school professors.</p> <p>C. The Bureaucratic Stratum: less prominent government officials and administrators, army and police officers, managers of state plants with 11 to 50 employees, head engineers, white-collar workers with high qualifications in private enterprises.</p>



Lower- 29.6%  
middle

- A. Propertied Lower-middle Class: farmers with 2 but less than 30 hectares; entrepreneurs and owners as above with 1 to 10 employees; retail dealers and tradesmen with 1 or more employees.
- B. The Intellectual Stratum: the grammar school and high school (equivalent to Bürger-schule) teachers.
- C. The "New Middle Class": managers of state and community enterprises with less than 11 employees; government officials and administrators with low qualification; managers of private enterprises with less than 50 employees; white-collar workers with medium qualifications; technical personnel with medium qualifications.

Upper- 24.94%  
lower

- A. The Propertied Upper-lower Class: peasants with less than 2 hectares, retail dealers and tradesmen with no employees except for family members; artisans, home-workers.

Lower- 38.8%  
lower

Semi-skilled and unskilled industrial workers; agricultural workers; workers in all other occupations; soldiers; unemployed; mendicants etc.

+ Jan Hájda, A Study..., p. 90-91.

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2. Published official primary sources
3. Memoirs and autobiographies
4. Other contemporary sources:
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  - ii. List of periodicals scanned
  - iii. Articles
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